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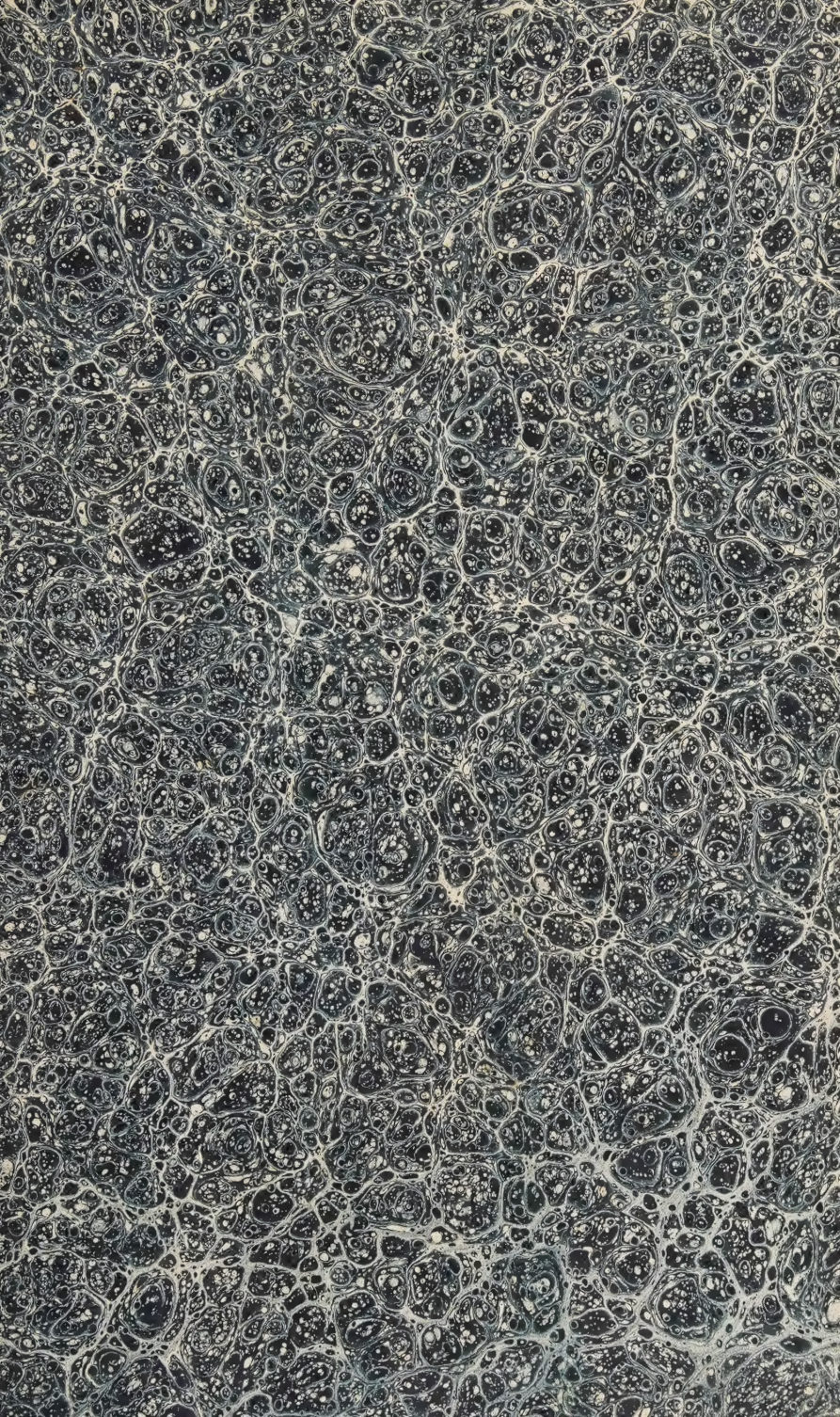

THEOLOGICAL DISQUISITIONS.

I.—*On Natural Religion.*

II.—*On the Characteristic Excellencies of the Jewish Dispensation.*

VOL. IV.

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A

TREATISE

ON THE

PASSIONS AND AFFECTIONS

OF THE

MIND,

Philosophical, Ethical, and Theological.

IN A SERIES OF

DISQUISITIONS,

IN WHICH ARE TRACED,

THE MORAL HISTORY OF MAN,

IN HIS

PURSUITS, POWERS, AND MOTIVES OF ACTION,

AND

THE MEANS OF OBTAINING

Permanent Well-Being and Happiness.

IN FIVE VOLUMES.

VOL. IV.

By T. COGAN, M. D.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR T. CADELL AND W. DAVIES, STRAND;
LONGMAN, HURST, REES, ORME, AND BROWN, PATERNOSTER-ROW; JOHNSON AND CO. ST. PAUL'S CHURCH YARD;
AND J. BINNS, AT BATH;
By G. Sidney, Northumberland-street, Strand.

1813.

THEOLOGICAL DISQUISITIONS;

OR,

AN ENQUIRY

INTO THOSE

PRINCIPLES OF RELIGION,

WHICH ARE MOST INFLUENTIAL IN

DIRECTING AND REGULATING THE PASSIONS AND AFFECTIONS OF THE MIND.

I. DISQUISITION,—*On Natural Religion.*
II. DISQUISITION,—*On the Jewish Dispensation, respecting Religion and Morals.*

By T. COGAN, M. D.

London:

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By G. Sidney, Northumberland-street, Strand.

1812.

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PREFACE.

The Reader cannot be more displeased at the inconveniences which attend the publishing of an extensive work, in a detached manner, and at different periods, than the Author of these disquisitions. This mode holds the one in a disagreeable state of suspense, and it may prevent the other from making that accurate and acceptable arrangement of the various parts of his subject, which would have been more practicable, had the whole been completed before the publication. But the Author was ignorant, when he began to apply the analytic method of reasoning, to moral and religious subjects, to what an extent it might lead him; nor could he conjecture to what a degree the

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attempt would meet with an encouraging acceptance.

It is twelve years since the introductory treatise was sent to the press. This tedious delay has been extremely unpleasant, and obviously injurious to the work. But various circumstances conspired to render it inevitable. Minute investigations of a moral and religious nature are not calculated for popularity. Nor is the attention or approbation of the contemplative few to be speedily procured. It was these considerations which held the author for some time in suspense, whether he should venture to prosecute his *ethical enquiries*.

The disquisitions which are now submitted to the candour of the public, were *printed* two years ago, with a view to an early publication: but they were composed under so many unfavourable circumstances, arising from personal indispositions, and family afflictions, that he was compelled to suppress that copy entirely, and submit to the expence incurred, rather than to expose the many errors obvious to himself, to the public eye.

that he might not again trespass upon the patience of his readers, he resolved also not to publish this more correct edition, until the final volume, *on the characteristic excellencies of Christianity*, should be in such a state of forwardness, as would enable him to announce that it will be published *early in the ensuing spring*. With that volume will be delivered, to those who may honour the whole set with a place in their library, an appropriate title-page, denoting the connection of the different parts with each other.

He may farther urge, as an apology for the extent of this work, that from the analytic method, brevity cannot be commanded. Whoever undertakes to defend or confute a particular hypothesis, is, in a considerable degree, master of his own operations. He has it in his power to limit the boundaries of his subject; to bring forward the choicest of his arguments, and to suppress those which he deems to be of an inferior importance. The analyzer is deprived of these privileges. He must continue his re-

searches until his own investigations are exhausted, or the analysis will be incomplete; and those principles which are requisite to form the solid basis of speculative opinions, will, even in his own conceptions, remain imperfectly explored. But the analyzer has the prospect of being indemnified, for the superior trouble which he has taken, by escaping many errors to which a partial view of subjects must be exposed; and by the discovery of some important facts, which systematic writers are prone to overlook.

Notwithstanding his expectations of being somewhat prolix, the author confesses that his researches have conducted him much farther than he could have imagined. He did not conceive that the *theological* part would have required so much attention. Although the subject of natural religion did not demand particular enlargement in the present work, it could not be omitted with propriety. It was introduced in order to maintain a kind of unity in his plan; and it furnishes an opportunity of making some observations which appear of considerable importance.

The author had at first expected that a cursory view of the Jewish religion, merely as introductory of the Christian, would have been sufficient for his purpose. But, in proportion to the minuteness of his enquiries, was he the more strongly convinced, that this dispensation deserved deeper researches; the more clearly did he perceive an interesting uniformity through its various parts; each of them, like the radii of a circle, tending to a central point; and in this central point, are placed the interests of the Gentile world, as well as those of the Jewish nation. The accumulating evidences of the importance of that dispensation, that it is worthy of God, and that it came from God, augmented his pleasure as he proceeded. To such causes must be ascribed the extent of the disquisition.

Several writers who have been zealous to support the credit of the Jewish history, have manifested great solicitude to confute the detached objections of unbelievers; and they have displayed much learning and

soundness of judgment in their endeavours. But they have proceeded upon the supposition, that the objectors were *intimately acquainted* with the nature, contents, and objects of the sacred records; and that nothing further would be requisite, to dispose them to walk in the paths of truth with an even step, than to remove certain obstacles which lay in their way. It was the *contrary* supposition which induced the author, to treat the Jewish dispensation with such minuteness of detail. He has presumed, that very few objectors have studied the Jewish history with attention and impartiality; for to readers of this description, there is every reason to imagine that all the objections advanced will appear trivial. It may be acknowledged, that some remaining difficulties require the elucidations of the learned, while they are impotent to silence the Oracles of Truth.

The evidences of a divine revelation are usually classed into two kinds; the *external,*

and the *internal.* The external evidence depends entirely upon human testimony; and the credibility of human testimony, rests upon the opportunities of information which have been enjoyed by the witness; the powers of his mind, rightly to understand and comprehend; and the integrity of his heart, preventing him from being influenced by any motive whatever, to invent a falsehood, or misrepresent the truth. For the external evidences relative to the Jewish history, we must refer to other authors. To have enlarged upon these, would have been a deviation from our plan; which has been to *investigate the moral history of man;* to trace the consonance between his moral nature, and the obvious designs of Providence respecting him; and to prove, that all the leading facts related in the Jewish history, are worthy of our belief, from their intrinsic nature and peculiar characteristics; that they are perfectly consonant with the nature, state, and exigencies, of the human race; and that they perfectly harmonize with the most rational conceptions

which can be formed of the perfections and providence of God. This *internal* evidence, connected with the *external*, forms an union not easily to be resisted; and it is most worthy of being received, for it is the confirmation of principles, which are the only preservatives against the horrors of superstition on the one hand, and the extravagancies of scepticism on the other.

In the pursuit of this object, the author was resolved to apply to no other source of information, than to the Sacred Oracles themselves. He is fully convinced, that a revelation from heaven cannot be so obscure in its *essential* points, as absolutely to demand the assistance of the Literati, however serviceable this assistance may be in articles of inferior consideration; or necessary to combat those objections which may arise from ignorance, and misconceptions, in their various branches.

There would not be much extravagance in the apprehension, that many pious and zealous Christians are not acquainted with

the history of the Old Testament, in the manner and to the extent which it deserves; or they would peruse it with greater pleasure, and treat it with more respect.

The indifference with which this dispensation has been too generally treated, even by those who deem it of a divine origin, may perhaps be ascribed to confused and imperfect ideas respecting its immediate object; and these, again, may proceed from an apparent defect in the arrangement of the materials which compose the Jewish history. The Sacred Records are journals of various events, with all the peculiarities attending them as they arose. Histories national and personal, institutions civil and religious, natural occurrences, miraculous interpositions, conquests, defeats, obedience, disobedience, trangressions, threatenings, rewards, punishments, Pagan rites, Jewish corruptions; these are related with great simplicity, but in a style and manner very different from modern compositions. The object of the historians was to perpetuate important events, establish important doctrines, deeply to impress the minds of

a perverse people, with a sense of their duties and their privileges; and to preserve them from the contaminations of their idolatrous neighbours, to which they were exposed for a series of ages. But to answer such purposes, no other order was necessary or practicable, than the order of time. This mass of materials, however, so heterogeneous to us in its appearance, contains incontestable evidences of wisdom more than human, in the execution of a plan worthy of the Deity; and truths in which the whole rational creation is equally interested. But these important subjects are blended together, in a manner which embarrasses a superficial reader, and with various other subjects, in which we seem to have no interest. The author hopes that many of these difficulties will be effectually removed, simply, by arrangements more adapted to modern readers; and by his having collected in a more conspicuous point of view, subjects which, in the current history, are separated from each other by the intervention of adventitious matter. The *mercantile* reader

will fully comprehend his meaning, when he intimates, that he has attempted to digest the miscellaneous contents of a *day book*, into a methodized *ledger*.

The particular object which the author had in view, when he applied himself to the perusal of the Old Testament with attention, was, that he might extract and arrange those doctrines respecting religion and morality, which were correspondent to the principles investigated in his Ethical disquisitions; and this circumstance has, at the same time, enabled him to trace the harmony that pervades the whole, notwithstanding the great diversity of the parts; and also the relation of this whole to the common interests of mankind.

It would, at all times, have been desirable to render the moral history of the world, which is contained in these Sacred Records, more intelligible, pleasing, and instructive to biblical readers. But at the present period, the pious ardour which is diffused over these happy lands, the unanimity

with which Christians, of every denomination, exert themselves to communicate light and knowledge to the Pagans in distant regions, and to instruct those who are nearly as ignorant as Pagans, at home, render every attempt to remove some of the obscurities which hang, like a mist, over the Divine Book, of peculiar importance. The period is approaching, and must arrive, in which that Book will become perfectly intelligible to believers, perfectly rational to unbelievers, and most acceptable to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death; and happy is every one who can accelerate its arrival.

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INTRODUCTION.

RELIGION is every thing, or it is nothing. It is the one thing needful, or it is a phantom of the brain. If a being or beings exist, who possess the power, and the disposition, to interfere in the concerns of mortals, and who are perpetually engaged in conferring favours, or inflicting evils, a most important connection, a relationship exists also, which no human being can dissolve, or elude; and it becomes an act of the highest prudence to turn this connection to the best account. Our earnest enquiries should, therefore, be into the reality of such an existence and agency, and in what manner we shall be able to secure the complacency, or avert the displeasure of these beings: and we shall naturally be induced to shape our conduct,

according to the ideas we may form of their character and requisitions.

That a being, or beings, exist superior to Man, and exert an influence over him, has been the universal opinion in all ages. No country has been totally destitute of some species of religion, or of superstitious rites ; which confirms the universality of the opinion. But it is on this point alone that mankind have been unanimous. The notions entertained respecting the number of these deities, their characters, their offices, their demands, the extent of their power, have been infinitely diversified, and most contradictory to each other; and this diversity of opinions has lead to correspondent actions, which have had a momentous influence upon the moral world, and largely contributed to the happiness or misery of the human race.

We have, upon a former occasion, traced some of the evils arising from absurd and superstitious notions of Religion. We have also combated the inferences which philosophic atheism has drawn from these ; and we have endeavoured

to prove, that a total abnegation of Religion would become a source of greater evils, than those which this philosophy professes to dread. We proceeded to show, that there are sentiments entertained respecting Religion, which are most conducive to human happiness ; such as perfectly correspond with the state, exigencies, powers, capacities of man, and form the basis of that felicity to which he ardently aspires. We observed that a Religion of this description must be consonant with the reason of all rational beings; that it must exert a similar influence upon all its votaries;—it must cherish the pleasant affections of love, gratitude, admiration, reverence, and hope;—it must be calculated to administer consolation to every sincere worshipper, in every situation of life ;—it must accord with the social character of man ;—it must authorize the expectation of more exalted happiness than this world can bestow.

In a subsequent Disquisition, we endeavoured to prove, that rational Religion not only administers personal consolations, but it places before us the most powerful motives to the prac-

tice of all those moral and social duties upon which social happiness depends. It teaches us to adore one universal sovereign, who loves virtue, has a perfect knowledge of human conduct, is wise and just to punish and reward; and who is the benevolent father of the whole human race.

In the Disquisitions to which a reference is now made, we confined our attention to the natural effects of these principles upon the mind, and their tendency to annihilate human misery! And from the above statements a very important question presents itself, "What are the evidences upon which the above desirable principles are founded? A deep and permanent conviction of their reality is necessary to give them the ascendency over inferior pursuits. Nothing enervates action so much as the prevalence of doubt; and nothing invigorates equally with hope. But hope, to be continually active, must be inspired by a conviction that has a solid basis: and it is most desirable that doubts should appear to be as opposite to reason as they are inimical to inward tranquillity.

When sensible objects affect the mind, their

existence is not doubted, and we presume that their qualities are known to us; but, whatever is not the object of our senses, can alone become impressive through the medium of *belief*. This belief can alone be distinguished from a mere creature of the imagination, by its being founded upon competent evidence, which it is more rational to admit than to reject. The question is, Does such evidence exist? Why may we not suspect, that the most favourable sentiments of Religion are merely *opinions*, like those entertained by the Pagan world concerning their gods? Why ought they not to be rejected also as creatures of the imagination, which, although they may be more pleasing, are equally delusive? These questions are pertinent, and demand a serious consideration.

But, before we proceed to an immediate answer, it may be proper to ask in return, what degree of evidence will prove satisfactory? In order to be consistent with itself, ought not the mind of the inquirer to be contented with such evidences of the consonance of the above religious sentiments with truth, as are universally

allowed to be sufficient encouragements to pursue good, by any other means? No one has ever demanded absolute *demonstration* in what concerns his secular affairs. High degrees of *probability* are always sufficient to encourage the mind to the most arduous undertakings. We are incessantly forming plans and projects which cannot promise a *certainty* of success. A reluctance therefore to admit the truths of religion, without absolute demonstration, has a very suspicious appearance. The virtuous principle must be very low in the barometer of that man, who will not cultivate a contented and patient disposition of mind; who will not be temperate, diligent, frugal, chaste, without an absolute certainty of some tremendous punishment hereafter, for the neglect of these virtues; or of an immense reward for the observance of them; and he that would resolve to be unjust, oppressive, or cruel, if he were not terrified by the apprehensions of future condemnation, is a very worthless member of society. Vice has never *demonstrated* to her profligate votaries, that she could communicate happiness. They always

act upon trust, when they pursue her pleasures, and they are always deceived; which has never been proved to be the case with the man of true piety; and this affords a presumption, that his principles of action are founded upon a more solid basis. If therefore we can adduce arguments to prove, that the sentiments of religion stated in the preceding Disquisition, are equally certain with the most prevalent inducements, by which mankind are constantly influenced, every rational being must confess, that he relinquishes his rationality, if he do not act upon them with a similar assiduity.

When the christian philosopher attempts to prove the truth of religion, he makes a distinction between *natural* and *revealed* religion. The first is confined to such conceptions of a Deity as may be formed by contemplating the works of nature, which accord with our reason, and which reason itself, under advantageous circumstances, might be able to discover. The knowledge of God by *Revelation*, is not confined

simply to the being and attributes of Deity, but extends to a supernatural communication from heaven, which has a respect to some specific commands to man, or to the manifestation of particular plans and designs of the universal governor concerning him. It is supposed to promulgate important truths, unknown to a world immersed in ignorance; and which the most enlightened minds either had not, or could not, have discovered.

The subject therefore divides itself into two parts; and in conformity to the above distinctions, we shall, in our first Disquisition, attend to those evidences of the being and perfections of deity, which are founded upon natural principles, and approve themselves to the understanding: and we shall attempt to show, that the sentiments of Religion most conducive to human happiness, and influential to the practice of every virtue, are consonant with the truest reason. We shall afterwards examine, whether they be not the immediate objects of a divine revelation.

DISQUISITION I.

ON NATURAL RELIGION;

OR,

The evidences of the Being and moral perfections of a Deity, deducible from the works of nature, and encouraging to the practice of virtue.

"He that cometh to God, must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."

Heb. xi. v. 6.

DISQUISITION I.

ON NATURAL RELIGION.

It is not our object to enquire whether the sentiments which are classed under natural religion have been discovered, or could have been discovered, by the powers of reason alone. Admitting the first conceptions of true religion to have been derived from a divine revelation, the reason of man must be convinced that they are worthy of God. It perceives at once their infinite superiority to absurd extravagances of paganism, and confirms our belief in revelation by the consonance of its doctrines with the principles of reason.

In subjects of human science every one perceives the distinction between *discoveries made*, and a perception of the *truth* of these discoveries. The architect designs and executes; the multitude approve and admire, what they could not have planned. The profound Philosopher alone may be competent to the inves-

tigations of science; a man of common understanding will be able to profit by his investigations. If the most desirable views of religion be in conformity with the first principles of reason, it is of inferior importance whether they *were*, or *could have been*, discovered by the exercise of intellect; or whether they were revealed by that being, who gave to man those powers of intellect, by which he is able to distinguish between supernatural interpositions, the pretensions of imposture, and the visions of fanaticks.

As our chief attention will be directed, in these theological disquisitions, to the grand objects of an immediate revelation, we propose to treat the article before us with all possible brevity. The analytical method which we have adopted, cannot be prosecuted to its due extent, in scrutinizing the natural arguments for the existence of an intelligent first cause. For every thing that exists in the immensity of space would present its claims. The author's sole motives for introducing this Disquisition, were a desire of preserving an unity in his plan; and the hopes that his observations, which respect the distinctions subsisting in the divine attributes, although they may appear to be novel, will not be considered as unimportant.

CHAPTER I.

SUMMARY VIEW OF THE ARGUMENTS ON WHICH A BELIEF IN THE BEING AND PERFECTIONS OF GOD IS FOUNDED.

PHILOSOPHICAL Theists unite in contemplating God as one, living, intelligent, spiritual, immutable, operative, and happy being; the source of all other beings: whose existence is from eternity: whose presence is universal: whose power is irresistible: whose knowledge embraces all real and possible existences: whose wisdom is unerring: whose goodness is as unbounded as his power and his wisdom; extending to every proper object in universal nature.

Theists maintain, that these sentiments of deity are not the hypothetic visions of the brain, but that they are supported by all the evidences which the immensity of the subject, and the contracted limits of the human faculties, will admit. They are embraced, because they alone

can satisfactorily explain the various and wonderful phænomena in nature; because they are most consoling in themselves, and most correspondent with the existence and state of moral agents.

From the many arguments with which they support these doctrines, we shall select the following.

When we contemplate the Universe, we contemplate a most extensive, curious, and complicated system, which bears innumerable marks of design in its conformation; and as naturally suggests the idea of a designing cause, as any well-contrived machine of human construction, indicates a contriver. Nor would it be more absurd to deny design, in the latter case, than it is in the former, were the nature of the workmanship found, upon comparison, to be merely equal. If therefore, the former be infinitely more surprising, extensive, complicated, and effective, than the latter, the absurdity of the denial is proportionably increased. It is irrational to acknowledge an intelligent cause in the formation of an *Orrery*, and refuse it to the formation of heavenly bodies, which it so imperfectly represents.

The more we contemplate the system of na-

ture, and the more intimate our acquaintance becomes with its different parts, the more forcibly are we struck with indications of design; of wisdom in the plan, power in the execution, goodness in the object; and the more are our evidences multiplied, of the existence of a *designing Cause*, who is wise, powerful, and good.

As the inanimate creation indicates a certain arrangement of different and heterogeneous materials, endowed with various properties, correspondent to the rank in which they exist, and contributing to the unity of the whole; and as these materials contain no marks of self-existence, or of natural activity, it is rational to consider the material world as a *production;* and as the production of a cause distinct from, and superior to itself.

As organized bodies, both vegetable and animal, manifest a *vitality*, which is not necessarily inherent in matter; as they are endowed with numerous diversities and gradations in powers and faculties, which have no affinity with the accidental arrangements of matter, it is most rational to ascribe their existence to an higher origin.

The perpetual changes that take place in the material world; the production, dissolution, and re-production, of animal and vegetable life, demonstrate that *Eternity* does not necessarily belong to them; and that the ascription of this attribute to them is arbitrary and conjectural. If they be not eternal, from a necessity of nature, they must have a cause prior to themselves. Notwithstanding the most extended concatination that may exist in the series of productions, effects succeeding to their causes, through incalculable ages, yet the mind must ultimately repose itself in a *first Cause;* who, being uncaused, must exist from eternity. If matter have no apparent claim to existence from eternity, of which there is not one vestige in its nature, and if it could not create itself, it must have received its existence from a Being, whose nature is different and superior.

To a Being who exists, distinct from and superior to matter, we ascribe the attribute of *Spirituality.*

All material forms depend upon the arrangement of their parts, and the dissolution of these

forms proceeds from the dissolution of their parts; the Being, therefore, who is superior to matter, not consisting of parts, must possess a nature free from dissolution. No supposable change can alter his mode of existence, or dissolve his being: therefore, no law of his nature can prevent his being eternally as he is.

By ascribing the works of creation to this uncaused Being, we acknowledge that he possesses power equal to the production; the marks of design stamped upon the works of creation, indicate that this powerful Agent is not an unmeaning, unintelligent Agent, but that he must possess wisdom and knowledge, equal to the undertaking.

This intelligent Cause, not being subjected to any of the laws of that matter which he himself created; nor to any superior power, for all power is an emanation from him; and not being necessitated to exist in one part of boundless space, more than in another, there can be no natural impediment to his *omnipresence*. If creation imply the operative presence of the creator, and if created beings exist through the

infinitude of space, his presence must be *universal.*

His knowledge accompanying all his works, and these being infinite, he must be *omniscient.*

When we contemplate the wonderful adaptation of various parts of the system to each other, and the harmonious result which characterizes the whole, our minds are deeply impressed with the marks of wisdom and active intelligence, inscribed upon every part, which fully manifest an *unity* in the whole. The more extensive our knowledge is of the productions in nature, the more extensive does his *Wisdom* appear; and if we have reason to conclude, that these are infinite, we must infer that his wisdom is infinite also.

In like manner, wherever we remark that the exertions of power, and the execution of plans, indicate some *useful* purpose, we form conceptions of that wisdom which not merely indicates skill, but which manifests *Goodness.* We conclude that the Being who forms purposes of good, must possess a *goodness of character.* The more these purposes are displayed in the diversities of

creation, and in its established laws, the more conspicuous is the union of benignity with wisdom, in the productions of an intelligent agent.

Not being in subjection to his own productions, being superior to all foreign opposition, and his wisdom invariably discerning what is best, the Will of this intelligent cause must be wise, immutable, and above controul.

Being incapable of deceiving or of injuring the meanest or the most exalted of his creatures; having a right, by the law of creation, to obedience to every duty enjoined upon his intelligent creatures; knowing the full extent of their powers, and viewing them with the eye of a benevolent source of their existence, he cannot be *unjust*, either in his requisitions or his punishments.

Not deriving his perfections from any one; knowing, without possibility of mistake, in what perfection consists, and possessing wisdom to give it the preference to the contrary, his perfections must be as boundless and uninterrupted,

as his knowledge, his wisdom, and his will. Thus as no interposition of matter can circumscribe his existence; as no part of space can refuse his presence; as no intellectual defect can obscure his knowledge; as no power can resist the source of all power; as no will can controul his, who gave to every being the power to will; as he must prefer perfection to imperfection, as decidedly as he discerns the distinctions; the necessary result is, that this great first Cause *must possess every possible perfection.*

As to enjoy existence is the incessant desire of every created being; for it is this enjoyment alone which renders existence a blessing; as he himself has implanted these desires in all sensitive and conscious beings, and has pointed out to intelligent beings the way to procure it; this Being must know in what *happiness* consists; he must know its indispensable value, and he must enjoy it to an extent as unbounded as his own perfections.

These attributes and perfections prove to us the *unity* of the divine nature. The supposition of *two* or more eternal, self-existent, neces-

sarily existent, independent, omnipresent beings; possessing equal power, wisdom, and goodness, is absurd and contradictory. If *one* be equal to every possible production, the others would be unnecessary; might remain inert without any deficiency in the creation; and the attribute of necessary existence, respecting them, would be annihilated.

Although our minds be lost in wonder and astonishment, when we employ their faculties upon the unoriginated existence, the spirituality, omnipresence, omniscience, and universal irresistible energy of the one intelligent Cause, yet our embarrassment is the natural, and necessary result of the infinite disproportion between our powers, and the subjects they contemplate. Finite conceptions cannot possibly grasp the whole of what is infinite. But incomprehensibility implies no other contradiction, than that which would consist in pretending to fathom it. These sentiments oppose not any one principle of reason. Our reason confesses the necessity of admitting them, in order to explain the phænomena of the natural and moral world. The more we exercise our rational faculties; the more we attend, inquire, reflect, investigate,

contemplate, the more clearly shall we discover the necessity of a first Cause; the more numerous will be the proofs of his existence; and with the greater confidence will our judgements decide that there is a God, possessing every natural and moral excellence. These sentiments are founded upon the indisputable axioms, that every effect must have a cause; that the cause must be adequate to the effect; and that the nature of the cause is known by the nature of the effect. Such are the principles universally received, whenever human plans, and human inventions, become the subjects of investigation. In no case whatever, do we refuse to acknowledge the hand of an intelligent agent, where the workmanship abounds with marks of intelligence and design: and as the signatures of skill, in the most exquisite productions of the human species, are confessedly inferior to the lowest productions in nature, the arguments in proof of the operations of an intelligent first cause, acquire a force proportionate to the difference.

The above concise summary is sufficient to show, that a belief in a great first Cause, possessing every possible perfection, and the source of all

existence, is not an *irrational* belief;—that it has not the character or appearance of being the creature of the imagination, or a mere vision of the brain;—that it is founded upon much surer principles, than those which peopled the Heathen nations with multitudes of deities, of various and opposite powers and propensities;—that such a being is not the production of fear, nor is he a frail creature, elevated to deification by servile flattery, or even by a spirit of gratitude; nor is he the personification of qualities and attributes, which ignorance had finally mistaken for real existences; nor can the existence of such a being be ascribed to any other cause of credulity, which had such an empire over the regions of Paganism. Our belief is founded on rational principles; will stand the test of reason; and is surrounded with evidences, of which every other hypothesis is totally destitute. The notion that the universal system of nature exists, by an eternally blind, unintended succession, is as extravagant as it is hypothetical. It is a mere assertion without a single argument for its support, and it is inconsistent with every phænomenon in nature. To assert that the world was made by chance, is to attribute an infinitude of power to a word without a meaning. It is to suppose that a fortuitous concurrence of atoms, possesses all the secrets

of infinite intelligence; and that a power which has never been suspected of building the *cottage* of a peasant, has built the *Universe!*

We have thus taken a general survey of the proofs, on which the belief of the Theist is founded. These arguments would receive infinite force, could the immense extent of the subject permit us to particularize. Nay, a minute attention to any part of this vast creation, which might be selected for our researches, would manifest to us innumerable traces of exquisite skill, to effect the purposes of benevolence. There is not any one subject of knowledge, in which the attentive and unprejudiced mind does not perceive the marks of wisdom, at every stage of its progress; and the greatest proficients will be the most forward to confess, that evidences multiply beyond the power of calculation. All the occupations of intellect consist in making perpetual discoveries in the state, properties, relations, connexions, accordances, and beneficial influences, which exist in the subjects of every branch of science.

But we shall content ourselves with simply referring to the subject which has been occupying so much of our attention; in treating of which, every page is replete with evidences that a Being

exists infinitely superior to man. The whole history of human beings, and of the developement of their moral and intellectual powers;—their primitive state of imbecility and ignorance, contrasted with their ability to make unlimited advances in every thing desirable and useful, and to work their way through numberless impediments, to those improvements which ornament and dignify their nature;—the passions and affections with which they are endowed, to stimulate them to action;—the provision made for the remedy of those errors and evils, which an ignorant or a perverse abuse of their free agency occasion;—their intellectual powers, and the nice adaptations of these to the many contingencies to which they are subjected;—the infinite superiority of Man to every other being on the globe, approaching to the dignity of superior intelligences;—the rich abundance of the means of good, which is spread before him, and the diversified sources of his enjoyment;—his being constituted a moral agent;—and his perceptions of that line of conduct, and of those duties, which constitute individual and social welfare;—the refined affections of which he is made susceptible, by which he is attached to his associates by the most delicate ties, and which are in exercise according to the degrees of merit in the object, expectancy of good, or

sense of obligation ;—his capacity to search after a great first Cause, and to entertain conceptions of him in the plenitude of excellence, arrayed in such attributes of power, wisdom, and goodness, as are calculated to inspire the love and admiration of all intelligent creatures ; such as implant confidence in seasons of difficulty and danger, and encourage the brightest hopes, under the deepest sense of demerits ;—are phænomena not to be explained by any other principle, than by the admission that we were created, and thus richly endowed, by an *intelligent*, *wise*, and *beneficent* FIRST CAUSE !

CHAPTER II.

ON THE DISTINCTIONS, AND GRADATIONS OF EXCELLENCE, IN THE DIVINE ATTRIBUTES.

ACCORDING to the view we have taken of the Nature and Attributes of God, a distinction presents itself, between the attributes essential to his *being*, and mode of *existence;* such as eternity, or self-existence, spirituality, omnipresence; and the attributes which belong to him in the character of *Creator*. He possesses the former, by what may be termed a *physical* necessity, unconnected with his productions, or with any plan respecting creation. The others are strictly *relative;* for they belong to him solely as they relate to some exertions, or proposed exertions, of the divine energy; or to beings whose existence is actual or pre-ordained. Of this kind are the *Power*, the *Knowledge*, the *Wisdom*, and the *Goodness* of God. *Power* expresses actual exertion, or the capacity of exertion. It is seated

in some cause manifesting its own existence by its operations. The power of the Deity must be irresistible, because he is the source of power, and of every other being invested with it. Every exertion of irresistible power must produce an effect. Hence we form the idea of that connexion which subsists between cause and effect; and which is so intimate, that the one cannot subsist without the other. Infinite *Knowledge* expresses the divine perception of the whole chain of effects in their causes, and a perfect acquaintance with all actual existence, and every possible existence in nature. Infinite *Wisdom* refers to plans worthy of its author, and to the best mode of executing these plans. *Goodness* has objects whose benefit it promotes or consults. All these attributes have a manifest reference to *existences.* They are in their very nature *relative;* for we cannot suppose them to exist, or to be possessed, totally unconnected with their objects, real or proposed. According to these positions, the great Creator, although he exist distinct from, and independent of, the works of his hands, has, notwithstanding, instituted the most intimate connexion between himself and all his creatures, in this his *relative* character: the exercise of these perfections necessarily implies the existence of created beings.

Notwithstanding the absolute perfection of all the divine attributes, yet we necessarily conceive of some as being more exalted than others; and they excite in the contemplative mind, those affections which are most correspondent to their character. The *natural* attributes of the Deity, Eternity, Self-existence, Spirituality, Omnipresence, are calculated to impress the mind with the profoundest wonder and astonishment! They amaze and confound the intellectual faculties of all created Beings; and the most stupendous of the divine productions become diminutive, and, as it were, shrink into nothing before them! Power, simply considered, is calculated to oppress and overwhelm the mind with *dread*; for it may be exerted to our misery: but Knowledge is allowed to be entitled to *respect;* an affection which is not applicable to power, abstractedly considered. Wisdom, which is the proper direction of knowledge and power, is *venerated* and *admired;* but still we may not be interested in its plans and operations. Neither of these attributes have primarily a claim to our *Love,* unless they be under the direction of *Goodness;* which attribute describes the *disposition* to promote our interests. To the union of these attributes belongs the mixture of reverential awe, profound admiration, and confidential love.

Power is in itself a property merely *physical.* In the abstracted idea it is unconnected with design or merit; for power is a property possessed by *inanimate* bodies; and it is acknowledged to exist by those who deny a Deity. *Knowledge,* or the capacity of discerning existences, properties, possibilities, &c. is of an *intellectual* nature. But although it belongs to *Mind,* it does not necessarily imply any kind or degree of moral excellence. *Wisdom,* which indicates the capacity of making the best possible use of this knowledge, is as superior to knowledge, as agency is to the instrument employed. This is *intellectual* in a higher degree of excellence. It also possesses something of a *moral* character; for there can be no wisdom, either in plan or execution, where some kind of *Utility* be not the object; still, however, it may be considered in the light of means solely valuable as they respect the end. But *Goodness* is strictly, and eminently *Moral.* It is in its nature of a boundless extent. If it be not universally operative it cannot exist as a perfection: it degenerates into partial attachments, and a partial fondness; and thus the idea of an exalted and amiable principle of action is destroyed. This attribute must be universally relative for *Good.* It is, in the Divinity, a pattern and prototype of the moral

relation of man to man. Hence we give it the title of *Moral;* borrowing the term from those social acts, which the divinity has rendered obligatory upon his intelligent creatures, in their relative capacity. This is the attribute upon which the chief excellence of character depends. It is a perfect security against the abuse of power; it renders knowledge truly valuable; and it diffuses a charm over all the plans of wisdom. The right direction of power, knowledge, and wisdom, consists in their being the instruments and means of goodness, and in the accomplishment of all its beneficent designs.*

Hence we perceive that the harmony of the relative attributes of God admits and demands, that those which possess the least of what we deem excellence, should be subservient to those which possess the most. Power has no claim to precedency over knowledge or wisdom, but it is to be directed and controlled by them. Wisdom, to maintain its character, requires for its object some plan of high importance, that its operations may be directed to some useful end, that is, to something productive of good. The action of a wise and beneficent cause, implies a *motive* of action correspondent to his moral cha-

* See Note A.

racter; to the nature and extent of his intelligence; and to his power of execution. The most excellent, the most wise, and most powerful Cause of all things, must operate to the best of purposes, and according to the wisest plans. But no purpose can be equal to the *production of Good*; that is, to the possession of bliss, and to the communication of such portions of enjoyment, as are best adapted to the state of individuals, and most consistent with the good of the whole. To him who is in the full possession of *All*, the exercise of his perfections must proceed from the determination to *impart* good.

Although to will, to plan, to execute, be equal and instantaneous, respecting the divine mind, yet in the order of our conceptions, the *Goodness* of God prompting him to create, is the first attribute that presents itself. The next is that of boundless *Knowledge*, by which he discerns effects in their causes, and every possible result from every possible energy. From such sources *Wisdom* is enabled to form its plans of extensive good, and to establish those laws, by which life shall be diffused, and its enjoyments multiplied: that Wisdom which has devised and constituted such a diversity of powers and properties, in the material and inanimate creation; of instincts and propensities in the animal king-

dom; and has endowed the human species with those intellectual and moral faculties, which are the inexhaustible sources of the most exalted and refined enjoyments. Such plans of wisdom and beneficence will be indubitably accomplished in their order, both of time and place, by a power which conquers all opposition; compels apparent obstacles into its service; changes disorder into harmony; and distress into blessings: brings light out of darkness, and cherishes virtue in the midst of depravities that confound and appal!!

CHAPTER III.

ON THE JUSTICE OF GOD, AS A MODIFICATION OF HIS GOODNESS.

In our analysis of the Social Affections, under the article Benevolence, we endeavoured to shew, that this principle indicates itself in the human species, under various characters, according to the state and circumstances of its objects. It is sometimes confined to sympathy; at others it assumes the title of generosity, of pity, commiseration, compassion, mercy. These terms express, in a concise manner, the distinctions which take place in the exertions of Benevolence, according to the exigencies, mental distresses, dangers or delinquencies, of those upon whom it is exercised. The same distinctions are applicable to that Being who implanted the benevolent principle within us. For, although the goodness of God be immutably the same in its nature, yet the manifestations of it are diversified, according to the state and situation of the subject. The inanimate creation

cannot be susceptible of the divine goodness; but as its formation, and every law by which it is regulated, respect the accommodation of living and susceptible beings, and their various powers of enjoyment, the material world is an *evidence* of the Divine goodness. In the different endowments of living Beings with capacities for enjoyment, the goodness of God assumes the character of *beneficence*; and when the number and greatness of his gifts forcibly strike the mind, we prefer the term *Munificence*, as more ample and dignified. In relief administered to distress, it is *compassion*; in the suspension or remission of deserved punishment, it has the character of *forbearance* and *mercy*; in the approbation of right conduct, it is *complacency*. Nor is the *Justice* of God to be considered in any other light than as an emanation from the immutable principle of goodness.

When we were examining the nature of Justice, we perceived that it consists in that conduct towards others which preserves their rights inviolate; and we remarked that a regard to equity is essentially obligatory upon moral agents, because it secures to every man a certain portion of good, which he claims as his own, or which is according to the extent of his rights. The

deprivation which it prohibits, is always the deprivation of a *good,* which is the property of another. It restrains from the infliction or diffusion of evil; and thus it secures to every one his portion of welfare. It co-operates, therefore, with benevolence in the production of beneficial effects; and, whenever the laws of justice are respected, more from the love of order, and the desire of promoting good, than from the apprehension of a penalty, or the expectation of a reward, it is a most valuable species of benevolence. The truly benevolent man cannot be unjust. His earnest desire to promote the welfare of another, will secure him from committing an intentional injury. When we apply this mode of reasoning to the Deity, it acquires strength in proportion to our conceptions of his benignity.

In contemplating the moral government of God, as it respects his intelligent offspring, the character of a *Legislator* immediately presents itself; and we cannot advert to those laws which we pronounce to be of moral obligation, without perceiving how essential they are to universal and permanent well-being. The wisdom and goodness of God have adapted all the duties of morality to the state and situation of moral agents, because personal welfare, and the felicity of social

beings, so immediately depend upon the observance of them. Therefore it is that the divine governor has annexed punishment to guilt, and recompense to obedience. Human laws may be unjust and cruel in their penalties, by rendering the suffering much too severe for the demerit of the offence; and they are seldom capable of distributing rewards according to theextent of merit. To the supreme legislator these imperfections are unknown. It is in the power, and also in the nature, of infinite beneficence, to reward far beyond the deserts of the obedient; but the attribute of Justice cannot punish beyond the degree of criminality.

Thus it appears obvious, that the divine justice itself co-operates with beneficence in the production of good. In its principle, it protects from the violation of rights; and it is the guardian of laws which have no other object than the general welfare.

In the above statement our readers will observe, that our attention has been solely directed to that conduct which is due from one being to another, in their social or relative characters. Nor can it, strictly speaking, be considered in any other point of view. For, although it be

self-evident that whatever is due to ourselves we have a *right* to claim, yet we are not absolutely *compelled*, by the law of justice, to receive according to the extent of our claim. We are not guilty of a personal injustice when we yield up, for the benefit of others, what is properly our own. This would annihilate every species of *liberality*. Nor are we compelled to demand satisfaction for every injury; for this would annihilate *mercy*. It may sometimes be prudent, and highly necessary, to punish offenders, for the sake of example, or for their reformation, but never to satiate revenge. A benevolent disposition will, if possible, cheerfully remit the punishment, whenever there is reason to believe that the penitence is sincere, and the reformation is accomplished. A total change of character deserves a change of conduct; and justice now inclines the balance in favour of the offender.

In the application of these principles to the justice of the Supreme being, a complete parallel does not exist, because he cannot *suffer* personal injury by the most nefarious practices; nor can he feel the resentments of impassioned man. When he inflicts punishments, denounced against transgressors, it is in his official character of *Legislator* and *Judge*, who demands a

strict observance of those laws upon which the felicity of moral agents depends. He may be inflexible respecting the obdurate and impenitent, but he cannot be *vindictive*; nor can the most rigorous exercise of the divine Justice, forbid the manifestations of his mercy to the humble penitent.

CHAPTER IV.

ON THE ASCRIPTION OF PASSIONS AND AFFECTIONS TO THE DIVINE MIND.

THE above observations concerning the divine attributes, united with the extensive view that was formerly taken of the nature, origin, effects, and final causes of the various passions and emotions in the human breast, may enable us to form some consistent ideas respecting the *Ascription of human Passions and Affections to the Deity.*

In times of gross ignorance, when the imagination is in vigorous exercise, and reason in its infancy, there is nothing too absurd to become an article of the most obstinate belief. But in proportion as reason gains the ascendency, will such absurdities be rejected. The heathen world, in the days of deep ignorance, saw no incongruity in ascribing the worst of passions to the most exalted of their Deities. But according to the advancement of civilization,

and refinement in manners, did their sentiments concerning the nature, character, and offices of their gods, become more refined; although a large portion of anthropormophism remained in their creeds. Nor will unworthy notions be entirely banished from the mind, until we shall have fully ascertained the nature of moral perfection, and have learned to draw just inference from that knowledge.

In our analysis of the Passions it was observed, that they originated from the two primary or cardinal affections of LOVE and HATRED. But it was also shewn, that these are resolvable into that one grand principle,—the *love of good, of well being, or happiness.* We have also shewn, that these passions and affections possess various characters: some are considered as innocent, others as criminal; some manifest superior excellence in a character; some superior deformity; some arise from our wants, desires, and apprehensions; some from our acquisitions, or from expectations of good; some from our sufferings; some are the sources of all the happiness our nature can possess; and others of all its misery. It has been further proved, that the affections which promote our happiness, in various degrees, and in various ways, possess different modifications of *Love* as essential ingredients; and that the

attention is always fixed upon some apparent good, by which are excited the pleasing sensations of hope, joy, satisfaction, benevolence, gratitude, admiration, &c.&c. It has also been shewn, that Hatred and Aversion are concomitant with unhappiness, in all its modifications; for evil is the most conspicuous in all their existing causes. These aversions are manifest in anger, sorrow, fear. It was farther remarked, that the most noble affections are those in which we discern that the mind is warmly interested in the welfare of another; and the most ignoble, are those which are designedly productive of misery, or wish evil to others.

With this short summary in view, we may easily ascertain which of the Passions are totally unworthy of the divine Being, and inconsistent with his attributes.

It is self-evident that none of those passions can be ascribed to God, which arise from suffering of evil, or apprehensions of its approach; or from the privation of good. No dangers can awaken fearful apprehensions, no loss can inspire grief, no error can occasion repentance. That Being who is above all controul, who is actuated by the best of principles, to effect the best of purposes, whose wisdom foresees the most remote consequences in every determination of

his will; who cannot be unjust to any of his creatures, that Being must be an eternal stranger to *sorrow, repentance, self-reproach, and dread.*

Weak and frail beings are naturally struck with awe at a power which is capable to do them an injury, and which no one can avert. They know that their own revengeful passions are quickly excited by a sense of injuries; and that a consciousness of having offended, fills them with dismay. Hence it is, that the first attribute that attracts the notice of the ignorant is *irresistible power.* Fear is the first, the strongest, and, perhaps, the only incitement to the worship of superior beings, in minds totally uncultivated. Oblations of praise and thanksgivings, are secondary; they are generally occasional and transient. The performance of any religious act, expressive of *gratitude,* is an indication that the mind is emerging from barbarism. Although Fear could not make the gods, but phænomena, which manifested a power superior to every thing human, and, consequently, exciting fear, yet it certainly armed these gods with terror. Fear is not only the first, and the strongest, but it is the most permanent of all the Passions. The terror that has been impressed upon young and tender minds,

by the superstitious tales of the nursery, is not always removed by a subsequent conviction of their absurdity.

These considerations may, perhaps, explain the reason why numbers who have formed very exalted sentiments of the divinity, are still prone to connect the idea of personal wrath, anger, or displeasure, at offences committed against the laws of God. They seem disposed to think that a resentment is excited, in the divine mind, against the sins of men, in a manner analogous to the sensations experienced by human beings from similar causes. The numerous and aggravated crimes committed by dependant creatures, surrounded with blessings, and endowed with powers which might be subservient to the highest purposes, are in themselves provocations of the greatest magnitude, and might justify the severest manifestations of indignant wrath; but that the all-perfect mind is not subjected to the passion of Anger, is demonstrable from the effects of that passion in us, the manner in which it is excited, and the nature of its exciting causes.

Although the anger of man should be justified by the provocations received, although its exercise should not exceed the boundaries of justice or discretion, and although the desire to

punish, to which the mind is instinctively prompted, may produce beneficial effects; yet it is a turbulent emotion which every wise man attempts to subdue. It disturbs every calmer and more refined pleasure; and it is totally inconsistent with that fullness of enjoyment, which is alone to be found in the indulgence of the benevolent and complacential affections.

If the transports of passion be so comfortless in the human breast; if they disrange the whole frame, and render it difficult to return to a placid state of mind, how tremendous the effects upon the supreme Being must be deemed, by those who think him altogether such an one as ourselves! They would be infinite in their intenseness! Every cause of anger being founded in justice, and causes perpetually recurring, effects would be reiterated to an infinite accumulation!

The paroxysms of Anger are always excited in us by the sudden *surprise* of a recent provocation, by which they are distinguished from habitual resentment, or permanent disapprobation. But no excitement of this nature can affect that mind which fore-knows every event, has pre-ordained every principle of action within us, and is intimately acquainted with the result.

The wrath of man is excited or quickened by a sense of *personal injury experienced or appre-*

hended; but who can injure the Omnipotent, or diminish his bliss?

The passion of Anger in us, according to its legitimate exercise, is implanted that we may *repel some injury*, or *prevent* a repetition by the instant punishment of a delinquent. It is sometimes a necessary protection against repeated acts of inconsideration and insult. Where this provocation is great, or the danger extreme, it communicates extraordinary strength to the corporeal system, and, by its sudden impetus, it gains a momentary triumph over the love of ease, fond partialities, and even the apprehensions of danger, in order to inflict the punishment due to an offender.

The transports of Anger are always the most violent in irritable habits, where there are no laws to protect; where there is a prevalence of selfishness and pride; and the greatest ignorance of human nature. Just laws render the irritations prompting to self-protection, the less necessary. The man who has subdued inordinate self-love, and has cultivated the social virtues, is most disposed to forgive injuries. He who knows the workings of the mind, and can make due allowances for the inadvertencies, situations, habits, the sudden impulse of a passion, and the force of surrounding inducements, will be most disposed to mo-

derate his resentments, and will sometimes permit compassion to subdue them.

In these remarks no particular application is necessary. The Being whom we serve is infinitely above such sources of irritation.

If we advert to those passions, and affections, in which we discover *Good*, and which are most conducive to our happiness, we shall see that they are excited by the peculiarities of our state. *Surprise*, *wonder*, *astonishment*, manifest the feebleness and ignorance of our minds. *Desire and hope* indicate our wants and defects; *Joy* is the pleasing impulse excited by the sudden possession of Good. *Contentment* acquiesces in the deficiency observed: *and Satisfaction* is the completion of a previous wish. *Respect*, *reverence*, *admiration*, *gratitude*, confess inferiority and dependence. *Compassion*, sympathy, &c. are painful sensations, excited within us to subdue indolence or selfishness. They, as it were, compel us to alleviate distress, and solace the afflicted.

These also are inapplicable to a perfect Being.

In a former work we observed, that *Love* may be considered either as a *Principle* or as an *Affec-*

tion. As a *principle* it was defined to be an invariable preference of *Good*; and an universal attachment to well-being and happiness."* As a *principle* it predisposes to action; as an *affection* it attaches itself to particular objects. Wherever there is an attachment, there is a source of happiness. An attachment is of itself pleasing, notwithstanding the imprudences and improprieties that may surround it: and where there is no obstacle to the indulgence of it, the enjoyment is complete. The more it is extended, and the greater the number of the objects it embraces, the more copious will be the sources of enjoyment.

In *Complacency*, love is united with *approbation.* This complacency may respect the conduct of those interesting to us, or our own conduct towards others. It is always produced by the perception or discovery of moral worth; of some Good attempted, produced, or enjoyed, in consequence of worthy designs, or worthy actions, performed from worthy motives. The discernment of moral worth inspires approbation in every lover of virtue. Complacency approves of motives; it approves of the choice and application of the best means of producing good; and it enjoys the beneficial result.

* See Phil. T. on Pass. p. 24.

These affections, therefore, possess the characteristics which are truly worthy of an infinitely perfect Being. His benevolent affections, with reverence be it spoken, must be inexhaustible sources of his felicity. He loves every being he has formed, or he would not have enstamped the epithet of Good upon all, at the period of their creation. He loves the wicked with the love of compassion, for they are still his offspring; and he has complacency with the righteous, as his favourites. Since he must be pleased with every object he has created, infinite and inexhaustible are his sources of bliss. He has complacency in all the plans which his infinite wisdom has formed, and in every exertion of his Almighty power, even the most tremendous, for he knows the good they produce; and he foresees that the final issue will be the diffusion of happiness.

Notwithstanding these irresistible evidences, that the immutable God is above all those passions and affections which perpetually agitate our breasts, it is confessed, that the whole torrent of language has constantly flown in direct opposition to the doctrine. Not to mention the ignorance of Paganism, which literally ascribed

all the human passions to the deities worshipped, without excluding the most depraved; those who have formed the sublimest conceptions of the Divine Being, still retain modes of expression which are not consistent with the acknowledged perfections of Deity. Not only has the general language of mankind, in different ages, ascribed various passions and emotions to God, but such ascriptions perpetually recur in those sacred scriptures which contain a revelation of himself to man. They perpetually describe him as being susceptible of passions, and as being actuated by them in his conduct towards the human race. The Anger of the Lord, his severe wrath and indignation, are frequently denounced against sin. Men are said to "provoke the Lord to anger by their abominations." He is frequently represented as *repenting* of his conduct. It is asserted that "when God saw the wickedness of man was great in the earth, it repented the Lord that he made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart." He is also described as repenting of his anger. "He regarded the afflictions of the Israelites, who were brought low for their iniquity; and when he heard their cry he repented according to the multitude of his Mercies." In some passages it is said that he is *wearied* of repentance. He is said to be a *jea-*

his God, to be provoked to jealousy. In other places he is represented as being full of compassion, and the strength of his affections is compared to the feelings of a fond mother for her favourite child.

In the solution of this difficulty we shall observe first that,

Although philosophy may affect to despise vulgar phraseology, and be alarmed at metaphorical language, on account of the obscurities it has sometimes occasioned, yet metaphorical forms of speech constitute the bulk of all languages; are the grand sources of their copiousness, energy, and, in many cases, of their precision: for nothing contributes more to a precision in our ideas, than a pertinent allusion to something that may be similar to the subject under consideration. The origin of language may be traced to sensible objects; but every idea beyond sensible objects, was primarily expressed by metaphor. The first act of the mind is to perceive existences; the next is to discover certain characters, attributes, and qualities, inherent in existing subjects; to this succeeds the perception of various kinds and degrees of resemblances, in things which are not essentially the same, and in which

there may, in various other respects, be great and striking dissimilarities. Hence, our early attachment to fables and allegories, which teach some important truths by suppositions, which are in themselves absurd and extravagant.

The imagination is in vigorous exercise much earlier than the reasoning powers of man. The earliest modes of expression have always consisted in borrowing imagery from the surrounding objects; and the warmer the imagination the bolder has been the imagery. In active minds resemblances are seized with eagerness; and these resemblances perpetually recurring, enrich all languages with a great diversity of idioms and forms of speech. In consequence of this universal propensity, metaphorical expressions have always obtained a precedency to the language of philosophy; nor can they be totally subdued by philosophy. Through a frequency of repetition, many expressions will lose their metaphorical appearance, and be considered as merely technical; but the most abstract terms could not have been introduced, nor would they have been intelligible, did they not retain a relation to objects of sense.*

If, therefore, subjects which are immediately

* See Note B.

within our reach, and which are confined to sublunary affairs, require the aid of metaphorical allusions to express them with perspicuity and force, it is not to be supposed that sensitive man would be able to invent such modes of expression as should do justice to those abstractions surrounding a Being, spiritual in his nature, and elevated infinitely above every object of sense.

We may observe, secondly, that such modes of expression respecting the Deity, are a necessary accommodation to the nature and situation of man. That great Being who is immutably the same, who is infinitely exalted above our versatile passions and affections, employs all his relative attributes to procure to the human race, what they are attempting to procure for themselves—*Happiness;* and to promote this object, "his eternal thought moves on his undisturbed affairs." But although his purpose is immutably the same, yet his conduct must be adapted to the circumstances and situations of his creatures; manifesting kindness, severity, complacency, chastizement, according to the dictates of his wisdom. To express these different modes, in all

their ramifications, philosophy possesses no appropriate terms; nor could any appropriate term be rendered intelligible to minds deriving all their ideas from sensible objects. Recourse must therefore be had to a species of analogy; and the conduct of God towards his intellectual offspring, is ascribed to the same passions and affections by which men are actuated, in their conduct towards each other. Because *we* so frequently change our purposes, in consequence of our experiencing sorrow and contrition, for our past actions, thus is a change or diversity in the divine proceedings ascribed, by a bold metaphorical figure, to the *repentance* of the Deity, as if he was also mistaken or disappointed in his object. Because human beings are prone to feel the turbulent emotions of *anger*, at injuries received, or offences committed, which excite in them a desire to punish the offender, thus is the incessant disapprobation of the Supreme Ruler, of vice and impiety, forcibly expressed by his anger, wrath, indignation: and the tremendous effects of his displeasure are denoted, by the sinner's "treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath." As we are excited by *compassion* and *sympathy* to pardon the crimes of the penitent, or to alleviate the distresses of our fellow creatures, similar emotions of commiseration and tenderness are ascribed to God,

in the diversified manifestations of his benevolence.

Again, it is not the sole object of language to state facts. It is also destined to give a powerful efficacy to these facts. It is frequently intended to excite in the human breast, certain *feelings* and *emotions*. For this purpose it uses imagery, by which, through the medium of fancy, distant objects, and even abstract truths, are rendered conspicuous and striking. It ventures to borrow resemblances from every quarter, in order to produce some particular impression upon the mind.

In times of simplicity, when knowledge is very limited, and ideas acquired by thought and reflection are comparatively few; when language is barren of accurate and appropriate terms; when the mind is neither diverted nor distracted by a variety of subjects; when the feelings are warm, and the imagination vigorous; when abstract notions and minute investigations do not check the impulses of nature, by demanding precision, the mind naturally and inevitably bursts forth into metaphor; and every emotion

is made known by the boldest and most animated terms. It eagerly seeks to do justice to its feelings, by imagery borrowed from every surrounding object. In proportion as a people become less simple in their state and manners; in proportion as general knowledge increases, and ideas multiply, a calmer spirit of investigation succeeds to the strong impulsive feelings of sense; precision takes place of animation, unequivocal terms are preferred to those which are more bold and indeterminate; the metaphorical style is consigned to poets and orators, whose professed object it is to please the fancy or move the affections; and the language which ceases to be popular, although it should not be misunderstood, begins to appear extravagant.

The Scriptures of the Old Testament were penned in times of the greatest simplicity. They were intended for the use of a people, whose ancestors had been slaves for several ages, who were just emerging from ignorance and barbarism, and whose ideas could never have been expanded, without the medium of sensible objects, and the bold imagery which they presented to the imagination. To such a people philosophical abstractions would have been uninteresting, had they not been unintelligible. Their lawgivers and prophets were compelled to use figu-

rative and metaphorical expressions, in order to awaken the attention and influence the heart. To realize to their minds, in the most forcible manner, the presence, inspection, authority, approbation, and displacency of the Deity, they incessantly represented the great universal Spirit in a language which in its stricter applications, belonged to human beings alone. To impress a conviction of his universal knowledge, it is said that "the eyes of the Lord ran through the earth." Divine power is represented by the human instruments of agency. In issuing his commands, or in the manifestations of his designs, he is always represented as *speaking;* and to demonstrate the facility with which he can destroy the wicked, it is said, "by the blast of God they perish, and by the breath of his nostrils they are consumed." And, as we have already shewn, it is upon these principles that all those passions and affections are ascribed to God, which have the strongest influence upon the human heart. Although such expressions are not adapted to the divine nature, abstractedly considered, yet there are points of resemblance by which they are peculiarly *adapted to the nature of man;* and they are calculated to convey more impressive sentiments of awe, reverence, love, and gratitude towards the Supreme Ruler of the universe, than could be effected by any other mode.

The above epitome of Natural Religion, and its evidences from reason, manifest that the truest reason vindicates those sentiments of the Deity, which are the richest sources of happiness. They are sentiments which, to the pious mind, enhance the pleasures of every legitimate enjoyment, and afford the best consolation in every affliction: for they are the foundation of hope and confidence in the universal parent and governor of his intelligent offspring. They are also sentiments which afford the strongest inducements to the practice of virtue, by implanting a conviction that this is the only acceptable oblation that can be offered on the altar of obedience. They assure us, that the God whom we serve *loves Virtue*; he loves it as the most permanent source of happiness to the individuals who practise it, and also to the whole of his extensive family; and they assure us that he will love those who imitate the benignity of his character. Obedience to the commands of such a Being, elevates every personal and social virtue, however trifling in appearance, into an act of *Piety*. It consecrates and ennobles every branch of prudence; every instance of self-command; every resistance to the seductions of vice.

The hopes inspired by such exalted sentiments, while they soften, *fortify* the heart; render patience and resignation *pleasant* duties; and they have enabled the pious even to *rejoice* in their sufferings.

In contemplating the attributes of the power, wisdom, and goodness of Deity, as *relative*, we feel ourselves *dignified*, by the perception of the intimate connexion subsisting between God and his creatures. In consequence of which connexion, not only every motive of benevolence, but every plan of wisdom, every exertion of power, respects not himself but other existences: they diffuse blessings over all the creatures of God in his vast creation. We cannot form more exalted, or more just conceptions of the divine *Felicity*, than by the conviction that one essential and inexhaustible source of it, consists in the incessant communication of good; and that all the joys peculiar to benevolence, belong to him who inspired the principle of benevolence, in a supreme degree. The transcendant Attribute of the divinity is Love.—Love, which delights in the contemplation, enjoyment, and communication of good; which diversifies its operations according to the exigencies of its objects; forms every plan for their benefit, and rejoices in the success. Benevolence thus operative, has *Complacency* for its eternal associate.

---Complacency in all that is known, in all that is planned, in all that is executed. It is the peculiar and exclusive characteristic of this Divine attribute, that it can look down upon what we denominate *Evil*, with satisfaction; can view temporary sufferings, endured by probationary creatures, with approbation; can anticipate the good which result from these sufferings; foreseeing that the sufferer himself, will, at a future period, rejoice in the distresses which once tormented his soul !*

* See Note C.

DISQUISITION II.

ON THE CHARACTERISTIC PECULIARITIES OF THE JEWISH DISPENSATION, RESPECTING RELIGION AND MORALS.

"These (the Bereans) were more noble than those of Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so. *Therefore many of them believed.*

Acts, ch. 17. v. 11, 12.

DISQUISITION II.

ON THE JEWISH DISPENSATION, &c.

PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS.

When we were treating of the progressive nature of Well-being,* we enumerated several insurmountable obstacles which presented themselves, during the early and uncultivated state of human nature, to the acquirement of rational, elevated, and influential conceptions of the being and attributes of Deity. It was remarked, that although such conceptions be of high importance, yet, according to the slow progress of intellectual improvement, they could not be formed by the power of unassisted reason, within the space of a long series of years. The asser-

* See Vol. II. Disq. iii. Ch. iv. On the Progressive Nature of Well-being.

tion was founded on facts. We know from history, that the wisest nations upon the earth, have degenerated into the greatest idolaters; and that they practised every superstition degrading to humanity. Notwithstanding the discoveries they might have made in various other branches of science, which rendered them the admiration of subsequent ages, the science of *rational theology* was totally unknown to them. Nor can it be disputed that the whole Jewish nation, and the most illiterate Christians of the present day, entertain more just and exalted conceptions of the Divinity, than had ever been formed in the minds of the most enlightened Sages of antiquity. It is therefore a legitimate inference, that we are indebted to a divine revelation for the sublime ideas of the nature and perfections of a Deity, which are now so familiar to the mind. For although such sentiments be perfectly consonant with reason, it does not follow that they have been, or could have been, discovered, by the unassisted efforts of the human mind, after they were entirely effaced. We are so formed, that native ignorance, passions, imagination, precede the due exercise of the rational faculties; and although the powers of just discrimination, and of drawing just inferences be of the utmost importance,

they are the latest acquirements of the human mind. It is reasonable to suppose that mankind enjoyed right conceptions of the unity and moral perfections of God, in the earliest state of the world; but these were succeeded by notions the most absurd, extravagant, and impious, that the wildest imagination could possibly form, or the most depraved heart desire. We know that, after a certain period, polytheism and idolatry prevailed, through the greater part of the habitable globe. This deviation from juster principles having once taken place, native ignorance, the strength of depraved passions, the influence of present objects, and the boundless eccentricities of the imagination, before reason could discover their absurdity, will enable us to account for the subsequent degeneracy of the human race.

The religion of the Pagan world was not only an apostacy from the true God, but the worship paid, and rites performed to mere images and emblems, and to all the creatures of a wild imagination, were fatal to the best interests of mankind. They weakened every moral principle, and gave strength to every vicious propensity. The practices which their own reason condemned, in the civil offices of life, were frequently

enjoined upon devotees as offices of devotion. The best affections of the heart were overwhelmed and subdued by the omnipotence of terror; and the most unnatural cruelties were committed, with a view to appease the wrath of avenging deities. We are assured, from the most authentic testimony, that every vice which degrades human beings, has been perpetrated as an act of piety: adultery, sodomy, prostitution, fraud, human sacrifices, even the immolation of their beloved offspring, were frequently considered as highly meritorious; or as the most infallible method of averting tremendous judgments.

When we contemplate the perfection of the divine nature, and that infinitude of majesty which places the great God above every service that human beings can bestow, we may rest assured that his felicity can in no way be affected by the perverseness of mankind. He cannot be robbed of any thing which constitutes his happiness, by the negligences of men, by their infidelities, or the alienations of their devotional services. But *they rob themselves of happiness.* They are perfect strangers to all those consolations which true religion can alone bestow; and to all those virtues, and social qualifications, which alone can be productive of per-

manent well-being; while they patronize every vice that can be productive of misery. It is these consequences which render the character and conduct of his creatures worthy of the divine interference.

From the essential goodness of God, which induced him to create sensitive and intelligent Beings, that they might partake of the varied blessings of existence; from the peculiar endowments bestowed upon rational agents, and the desires to enjoy happiness, so implanted in their nature, that nothing can eradicate them; and from the means of good so amply bestowed, we are authorised to conclude that he *wills* the good of all his creatures; and we are encouraged to cherish the hope, that he is provident of peculiar good, respecting man. This hope may safely be indulged, notwithstanding our native ignorance; notwithstanding the culpable irregularities of our passions and affections, and the scenes of misery they occasion. The moral history of man proves to us, that if we be not happy, there are sources of happiness placed before us; if we err through ignorance, we have intellectual powers, by which we are enabled to correct these errors; if the inducements to immediate gratification be strong, there

are other considerations placed before us, of sufficient moment in themselves, to arrest our attention, and to act as a restraint upon every evil propensity.

But the operation of these efficient causes demands a process. We are not born in the centre of perfection, either in principle or example: We are not destined to be happy, without a struggle to obtain happiness: It is not our lot to sit in indolent ease, without purchasing a title to what we are to enjoy, by the observance of right conduct, the pursuit of right objects, and the cultivation of right affections.

Unless man had been created with that degree of knowledge which is now the purchase of much observation and experience, and with an invincible bias towards virtue, acting as uniformly as the instincts of animals in their pursuits of good, he must be liable to many aberrations. This proneness to erroneous conduct may be considered as the natural consequence of that *free agency* which is a characteristic of man; and for the exercise of which, every other faculty he possesses is merely preparative. To avoid metaphysical intricacies, we have preferred that definition of free agency

in which all metaphysicians will perceive their peculiar principles are included. We have directed our ideas solely to the *physical* power of man; to do what he *wills* to do, without being restrained by any foreign impediment; and to the position that the mind is always influenced by inducements; the strongest of which becomes the motive, or the moving cause of the subsequent act.* By this exalted privilege, of which no human being is disposed to be deprived, imperfect creatures are destined to form their own characters. They are free to act according to whatever line of conduct they may prefer; to seek whatever shall appear most desirable, and by whatever means they may choose; but it is upon condition that they are to *abide by the issue.* This important, though dangerous, privilege being possessed from the commencement of existence, during our ignorance and inexperience, we unavoidably are subjected to great, manifold, and pernicious errors.

As all our powers, faculties, and natural propensities, were implanted by the Creator, we may safely conclude that he has designed

* See Vol. II. Disq. II. ch. iv. Volition.

them to operate to the utmost extent of their beneficial energies ; nor can any supernatural or miraculous interference, be requisite to produce the good which they are able to accomplish. But the deviations arising from the uncontrolled liberty of following propensities of every kind, may plunge us too deeply in the gulph of folly and wretchedness, for exertions merely human to extricate us. By perpetually mistaking the ideas which crowd into the imagination, for the dictates of the understanding, and by repeatedly yielding to the impulses of passion, which *obscure* the understanding, the human mind may finally be rendered *incapable* of acting rationally ; and thus it will retain no counterpoise to the powerful influence of present objects, or the immediate gratifications they propose. Such consequences *may* flow from the abuse of free agency ; and the history of the human mind testifies that they *have* flowed in such an abundance as to deluge the world.

Since a commencement of depravity must have taken place, at a period when purer principles were professed, and before polytheism, the worship of idols, and the observance of abominable rites became universal, what reformation could be expected from succeeding generations,

born in the midst of ignorance and depravity? initiated into perverse principles from their infancy? surrounded with perverse examples, without a single ray of light to conduct them into the right path? Opinions imbibed by those who were taught that nothing deemed sacred could be absurd, and practices rendered familar by habit, which reconciles to every extravagance, must erect an effectual barrier against the possibility of a reformation originating from themselves. Were it possible that the unity of the Deity, his moral perfections, an universal providence, and, the obligation to practise every virtue from a principle of duty, could have been discovered by some individual of a superior mind, merely by the light of nature; yet the salutary influence of these truths would be almost imperceptible. The gross ignorance, depraved passions, and inveterate prejudices of inferior minds, would effectually prevent their reception. The Multitude would reject the sentiments of their teacher, with derision and contempt. Nor would the Sage be qualified to announce the plans of Providence, respecting the moral interests of mankind, or enforce the practice of any one virtue, with the voice of

authority, or by absolute promises respecting futurity.

But if we acknowledge a divine interposition to be highly necessary, upon extraordinary occasions, it cannot with justice be considered as an arbitrary violation of the established laws of nature, however great may be the deviation from the usual course of things. Such an interposition assumes the character of *provisional aid*, adapted to the contingencies incident to that freedom of agency with which our nature is honoured; and thus it constitutes, in reality, an essential part of the divine plan. The power of the Almighty is able, at all times, to exert a salutary influence upon every individual mind; it can illuminate the understanding, and rectify the will, in such a manner, and to such a degree, as shall effectually annihilate the influence of every seduction; but the constant exertion of this power would also annihilate that *optional* power in man, so essential to the character of a free moral agent. It would render man a *machine*. He would constantly go *right*; but he would be *compelled* to go right, and the most exalted motives of action could no longer exist. Since the excellence of virtue is to be ascribed to the rational, conscientious, and triumphant exertions of a men-

tal energy, in opposition to vicious inducements, and vicious propensities, it cannot be practised *instinctively* or by *compulsion.*

Another mode of opposing ignorance and vice, and gradually destroying their mischievous effects, more consonant with the nature of man, consists in forming, by an immediate revelation, a deposit of religious and virtuous principles, to which the ignorant may at all times apply for knowledge;—by which the irresolute may have their virtue established;—in which the vicious may view, as reflected from a mirror, the blackness of their characters;—the promises of which may afford ample encouragement to the righteous, to persevere in the paths of virtue, as conducive to permanent happiness;—and its threatenings may warn the vicious and profligate of their danger. By these means the darkness of the moral world may be gradually illuminated. Thus may right principles and dispositions work their way, through the obstacles which ignorance and vice have opposed to their progress; and in a manner which still renders the love and practice of goodness the honorable result of human efforts.

Such conceptions of the divine conduct perfectly harmonize with the best principles em-

braced by every one who believes in the being of a God. They imply that the Deity superintends human affairs according to general laws; that he knows in what manner, and to what an extent, these laws will operate in the production of Good; in what manner, and to what extent, this production of Good will be delayed by the capricious free agency of ignorant and perverse mortals. They maintain that the *power* of God is able to make such changes in his mode of government, as the aberrations of his creatures may have rendered necessary for the accomplishment of his designs; that it is perfectly consistent with infinite *wisdom* to exercise this power upon great emergencies; and that his *benevolence* always disposes him to exercise the attributes of wisdom and power, in the production of Good.

It must further be admitted, that these occasional interpositions may take place in a manner best adapted to the nature of the occasion: that, in some cases, the divine Being may openly display the greatness of his power, either to strike terror or to implant conviction; and in others, this power may be so imperceptibly exerted, that no mortal shall be able to distinguish his extraordinary operations from the usual tenor of his

conduct. With what facility may a train of important events be produced by Almighty power, through the suggestion of a single thought to the human mind, or by a single fiat of his will!

As the Deity cannot contradict himself; as we expect from the divine power and wisdom an uniformity of design, in the midst of the many diversities which may be required for its completion, we may safely assert, that whatever he has revealed, in a supernatural manner, must be correspondent to his nature, character, and beneficent motives of conduct; as well as to the nature and immediate state of man, to whom the revelation is made. If a knowledge of the existence of the one living and true God, be essential to the acceptable worship of him, or to an uniformity in our services; if a deep sense of the greatness of the divine being, and the excellence of his moral character, be important to mankind, necessary to the cultivation of right principles, and right affections towards him, we may justly expect that correspondent signatures will be strongly marked upon every immediate revelation from heaven. If the practice of virtue be essential to the production of personal and social well-being, the God who desires human felicity will

enjoin the practice of every virtue;—and as we feel that human volition is finally determined by motives, we have reason to expect that such inducements to right conduct will be placed before us, as shall be vastly superior in themselves to all the allurements to vice; such as shall be calculated to operate with due force upon sober and reflecting minds, and induce them to yield obedience to the duties enjoined.

To the *Jewish* and *Christian Dispensations* alone can these characteristics be ascribed. They alone entertain such conceptions of the divine being, perfections, and conduct, as recommend themselves to the truest principles of reason; such injunctions as uniformly inculcate the duties of morality; and such motives as recommend themselves to the best interests, and most exalted views of responsible beings. These dispensations, therefore, demand our peculiar attention. The important truths they reveal, are not only consonant with those conceptions of a Deity, which we have proved to be most conductive to human happiness, and the most encouraging excitements to the uniform practice of virtue, but they are the sources whence those conceptions are derived. It is indubitable that, previous to these

dispensations, the world was immersed in religious ignorance; and *since* their promulgation, mankind have made a more rapid progress in religious knowledge, than could have been expected from the slow progress of ratiocination for a long series of ages. If any just inferences may be drawn from the many ages of total ignorance which preceded, *to these Dispensations must the change be ascribed.*

We shall therefore attempt to investigate the important principles contained in each dispensation, as far as they respect the moral state and nature of man, and as they discover to us the plans of Deity, in promoting the cause of virtue and happiness, through the medium of pure and undefiled religion. This investigation will manifest to us the close connexion that subsists between the different parts of the divine œconomy, and enable us to trace a perfect correspondence between the nature of man, his best affections, most exalted desires and expectations, and the plans of Providence concerning him.

We are now advanced thus far in our investigations respecting conduct :—

The practice of virtue, personal and social, is essential to permanent well being :—

Pure and exalted sentiments of a Deity are the best security to the stedfast and uniform practice of every virtue :—

Such sublime and influential sentiments are approved by the truest principles of reason :—

Human Beings were liable, and very prone, to deviate from the paths of virtue and morality, in a state of imperfection and ignorance ; and it is an undisputed fact, that they *have* deviated :—

The Human race, universally plunged into the depth of ignorance and depravity, could not be expected to reclaim themselves :—

Their restoration to knowledge, virtue, and happiness, was an object worthy of the divine interposition :—

It appears to be most consonant to the wisdom of God, to respect that constitution of human nature which his wisdom had ordained ; employing the instrumentality of natural causes, either physical or moral, to the utmost extent of their beneficial influence, and reserving the extraordinary exertions of his power for extraordinary occasions.

Man being rendered susceptible of strong im-

pressions from surrounding objects; being furnished with numerous passions and propensities, which were always operating, favourably or unfavourably, in his pursuits of Good; being endowed with rational faculties, by which he is enabled to profit by his own observation and experience, and by the experience and observation of others, and also to bring every principle, deserving to be received or rejected, to the test of reason; being honoured with the noble, but dangerous power of free agency, by which he chooses and determines for himself, forms his own character, and greatly influences his own destiny:—man, thus circumstanced, is ordained to be governed by very different laws than those which belong to physical impulse, or to the instincts of the brute creation. The supreme governor demands from him, in every stage of his progress in the pursuit of well being, the union of right affections and dispositions, with the unsophisticated dictates of his reason.

It remains for us to shew, that the Jewish and Christian revelations are founded upon the above principles: that the grand design of the former, was to promulgate those truths, concerning the being and attributes of God, which approve themselves to our reason, and are essential to our wel-

fare; to inculcate those moral duties on which personal and social happiness so much depend; and also to preserve just sentiments of the Supreme Ruler, and the knowledge of religious and moral duties entire and uncorrupted, amidst the dark ignorance, and horrid depravities, which were prevalent in the world, and which must have been both universal and irremediable, without the divine interposition.—We shall also evince that the object of Christianity is to complete the plan of infinite benevolence, by universally diffusing these pure principles of religion and virtue; by proposing the most encouraging motives to the practice of them; and by insuring final happiness to the righteous, that is, to such as shall be qualified to enjoy it.

We will presume that our readers believe in both Dispensations, as being of divine origin; nor would it be relevant to our design, were we to adduce any other evidences of this truth than such as are *internal*, and such as may present themselves from the obvious correspondence of the doctrines they teach, with the most rational conceptions of the Deity, and the moral state of the human race.

We shall devote this Theological Disquisition, to an *enquiry into the Characteristic Peculiarities of the Jewish Dispensation, respecting Religion and Morals.*

They who believe that the history of the Jewish nation, as recorded in the writings of the Old Testament, was written under the directing influence of the Deity, will not be surprised that it should deviate, in many respects, from the modes of composition observed by uninspired writers. The historical parts consist of a plain, unadorned narrative of facts, which are of a peculiar nature. The narrative is given without any attention to the beauties or elegance of style, which distinguish the works of men of genius and taste; but with a dignified simplicity, far beyond their imitation. The sacred writers indulge in no speculations; affect not a sentimental language; seek not to display their sagacity; form no conjectures; draw no inferences. They mention facts as they were, or as they appeared to be, in the eyes of the spectators, without comments or expletives. They record the good actions of the Upright, with appro-

bation, void of panegyric; and their crimes with fidelity, without palliatives or censure. They publish the important truths of religion, with an elevation suited to the sublimity of the subject, and with an interest which affects the heart. They instruct in all the moral duties, with simplicity and perspicuity; they promise rewards and denounce punishments, with a solemnity correspondent to the authority under which they act. This plan was adopted by the author of the Pentateuch, and was strictly followed by every succeeding writer.

The sacred history commences with a slight sketch of man, from his creation; and also of his subsequent state, in the early periods of human existence, as introductory to its grand object; which is, to present the world with a *theological and moral history of a select people*, for a series of many hundred years. It gives us a minute detail of the Divine conduct towards this people, respecting religion and morals; respecting the means pursued to promote a spirit of obedience; to correct their perverseness; to inspire a confidence in the divine administration; to extricate them from dangers and difficulties; and to lead them through a long train of extraordinary and important events, which

occurred from the days of Abraham, to the final establishment of his posterity, in the land of Canaan. It farther informs us that, in consequence of this divine or theocratic government, the Jewish people—and the Jewish people ALONE,—were in a great measure preserved from the religious ignorance, idolatries, and gross immoralities, in which every other nation was deeply involved; that by these means the worship of idols was gradually abolished; a knowledge of the true God was widely diffused; and a path was prepared for the advent of the Son of God, to complete the plan of the Deity, in promoting the happiness of man.

The peculiarities of this dispensation, which respect our subject, are the following:

I. The Jewish religion promulgates those doctrines relative to the Being and Attributes of God, which are so consonant with our reason; and it enjoins the practice of all those moral duties, which are essential to human well-being.

II. The Jewish history informs us of the manner pursued by divine Providence, to preserve the doctrines of Religion and Morality from the corruptions of surrounding nations.

III. The same history informs us, that the selection of the Jewish nation, for this purpose,

was not for the exclusive benefit of that people, but introductory to a dispensation, by which all the nations of the earth were to be blessed; and it enables us to trace the preparatory progress.

IV. The union of the above peculiarities in the Mosaic dispensation, presents us with strong internal evidences of its divine origin.

CHAPTER I.

ON THE DOCTRINES CONCERNING THE BEING AND ATTRIBUTES OF GOD, THE DUTIES OF MORALITY, AND THE SANCTIONS OF THE MORAL LAW, AS REVEALED IN THE JEWISH DISPENSATION.

THE sacred penman commences his history by asserting the existence of One God, and ascribing to him the creation of all things. He gives us, with a sublime simplicity, a distinct account of the process of creation, as it was accomplished at different periods,—by that Word which is omnipotent,—from the darkness of chaos, to the preparation of inanimate nature for the reception of living beings; and from the creation of the inferior race of animals, to the formation of man.

Although the inspired historian particularly enlarges upon the formation of this earth, with its various inhabitants, yet, lest the creation of other worlds should be ascribed to other beings, he attributes the existence of the heavenly bo-

dies to the same Almighty cause. "And God made two great lights; the greater to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night; and he made the stars also."

This simple and dignified narrative of Moses, has been received as a fundamental article of the public faith, by the whole Jewish people, from their first existence as a nation, to the present hour. Through every change experienced by them, they have as a body preserved the one principle—*that God is the creator of all things*, immutably the same. Although a belief in the being of a great first Cause was professed in the earlier ages, preceding the existence of the Jewish œconomy, yet by this people *alone* did it continue to be acknowledged and preserved, for a series of ages. It was perpetually inculcated in every part of the Old Testament, in opposition to the idolatrous notions of the Gentile world. When the ten commandments were proclaimed from Mount Sinai, in a manner the most solemn and awful, they were introduced by the majestic declaration, "I am the Lord thy God who have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other Gods before me," &c. &c. While the sacred Historians uniformly maintain the infinite importance of this doctrine, and record the

repeated prohibitions to worship the celestial bodies, or the most remote emblems of power and attributes of any kind, in imitation of the surrounding nations,—and that under the most dreadful threatening, their Poets and Prophets proclaim and celebrate the great Creator of all things, in language the most solemn and sublime. "Praise him," exclaims the enraptured Psalmist, "sun and moon; praise him all ye stars of light; praise him ye heaven of heavens! Let them praise the name of the Lord, for he commanded, and they were created." The prophet Jeremiah, speaking in the name of the Being who inspired him, declares, "I have made the earth, and created man upon it. I, yea my own hand have stretched out the heavens, and all their hosts have I commanded." Expostulating with the Israelites for their propensities to idolatry, he reminds them that, "the Lord is the true God; he is the living God and an everlasting king. The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, they shall perish from the earth, and from under the heavens." "He hath made the earth by his power; he hath established the world by his wisdom; and he hath stretched out the heavens by his discretion."

As the existence of one God is uniformly

maintained, in opposition to every imagined deity, thus do these Scriptures repeatedly ascribe to him all those attributes, natural and moral, or relative, which we have shewn to be so conformable to the truest reason, and essential to the happiness of man:—Eternity, Omnipresence, Power, Wisdom, Knowledge, Holiness, Justice, Truth, and Goodness in its various branches. The passages in which these perfections are ascribed to the one God, are numberless. We shall select a very few under each head. Their interesting sublimity will prevent their appearing tedious to the devout reader.

ETERNITY.

"Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting thou art God." "A thousand years in thy sight, are but as yesterday when it is passed, and a watch in the night." "Of old thou hast laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of thy hands; yea all of them shall wax old like a garment; and as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed;

but thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end."*

OMNIPRESENCE, AND OMNISCIENCE.

" The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth." " The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good." " Whither shall I go from thy spirit, or whither shall I fly from thy presence?" " If I ascend into heaven thou art there, if I make my bed in hades, behold thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say surely the darkness shall cover me, even the night shall be light about me: Yea the darkness hides not from thee, but the night shineth as the day; the darkness and the light are both alike unto thee."

POWER.

" I am the Almighty God; walk before me." " I appeared unto Abraham by the name of

* We omit the numerous references as tedious and unnecessary.

God Almighty." "The thunder of his power who can understand?" "He ruleth by his power for ever." "He hath shewn his people the power of his works." "The Lord reigneth, he is clothed with majesty: the Lord is clothed with strength, wherewith he hath girded himself." "The floods have lifted up, O Lord; the floods have lifted up their voice: the floods lift up their waves. The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea."

WISDOM.

"The Lord by wisdom hath founded the earth; by understanding he hath established the heavens; by his knowledge the depths are broken up, and the clouds drop down the dew." "Lord, how manifold are thy works; and in wisdom thou hast made them all." "He establishes the world by his wisdom." "Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever; for wisdom and might are his." "He giveth wisdom to the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding."

PURITY; HOLINESS.

The moral perfections of God are represented, in these sacred oracles, under the characters of

Purity and *Holiness,* as well as Justice, Truth, and Goodness. The *Purity* of God, is a term now understood to express the perfection of the divine nature in general, both in principle or rule of acting, and perfect equity of conduct. But among the Hebrews it implied something more. As the Jewish nation was surrounded with Paganism, and deities were worshipped, to whom were ascribed, without a blush, the immoralities and propensities of wicked men, the Purity of the one spiritual Being and the true God, was often placed in contrast to the imputed characters and conduct of these imaginary beings. Since the establishment of Christianity, the gods of our ancestors are almost effaced from the memory. Our conceptions of superior intelligences are now sublimated from the grossness of matter; and we reject, with disgust and horror, every idea of corporeality and depraved affections, when we contemplate the divine Being. The terms Purity and Impurity now relate to *Mind* alone; and we can form no other conceptions of the divine Purity, than as implying a total exemption from every thing that is inconsistent with a perfection of character; as perfect rectitude, or an infinite superiority to every unworthy principle, improper motive, and

false disguise, which are so frequently blended with the moral characters of men, and sully their most splendid actions.

Holiness, when applied to God, conveys similar ideas in more solemn language. The word expresses a consecration of whatever belongs to Deity; and as every thing which relates to religion is expressed in select terms, our imagination has annexed to it peculiar solemnity. The term Holiness is devoted to religious subjects exclusively; and when applied to the divine Majesty it suggests the idea of a *sacred* purity. It is thus employed to inspire frail and imperfect creatures with deep humility; and it is calculated to augment the devotion of the Pious, by marking the awful distance subsisting between this great Being, and the sincerest of his worshippers.

When the term Holiness is applied to man, it connects the religious principle with the laws of morality. It consecrates Virtue by rendering the practice of it a *religious* service. It extends to that self-dedication to the worship and service of God, which constitutes the sublimity of a pious character. But when the holiness of God is recommended to our imitation, the idea is necessarily confined to that moral rectitude which never deviates from the path of right;

and to the beneficence and mercy which he perpetually exercises towards all his creatures.

Innumerable are the passages in which the purity and holiness of God are asserted in the most majestic and awful manner. "The stars are not pure in his sight." "Shall mortal man be more pure than his Maker?" "The words of the Lord are pure words; the commandment of the Lord is pure." "Every word of the Lord is pure; he is a shield to them that put their trust in him." "I the Lord your God am holy." "For there is none holy as the Lord." "But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praise of Israel." "The earth is his footstool, for he is holy." "And one cried unto another and said, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory."

The display of this purity and holiness, in the divine conduct towards his creatures, is often expressed by *Righteousness, Justice, Truth, Goodness.* "Oh Lord God of Israel, thou art righteous." "The righteous God trieth the heart and reins." "The judgments of the Lord are righteous." "I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return." "There is no God else beside me; a just God and a Saviour, there is none beside me."

It is consoling to observe that the passages in sacred writ, proclaiming the *goodness* of God in all its modifications, are the most abundant. They pervade every part, whether it be historical, poetical, or prophetic. They all declare that, " the Lord God is abundant in mercy and truth: that the earth is full of the goodness of the Lord." " Oh taste and see that the Lord is good," says the Psalmist. " Praise the Lord for his goodness." " The Lord is good, his mercy is everlasting, his truth endureth to all generations. He is slow to anger and plenteous in mercy. The earth is full of the mercy of the Lord." " Mercy and truth shall go before thy face." The application of the word *Truth* in this passage, is connected with the display of the Divine Mercy. Hence it obviously refers to the fulfilment of his promises. His veracity is pledged, as it were, for the accomplishment of the designs of his mercy. As the judgments threatened, may always be avoided by true penitence, thus have the righteous, and the penitent, a *claim* upon the divine veracity. The instinctive love of parents for their offspring, is also adduced, as an emblem of the divine commiseration. " As a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." " Can a woman forget her suckling

child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee."

Nothing can manifest the deep impression which the divine perfections, and a conviction of his universal government, made upon the sacred writers of the Old Testament, in a stronger manner, than the triumphant exclamations with which they call upon the whole creation, to unite in the celebration of his praises. In this, the psalmist David eminently excels. "Oh clap your hands all ye people: shout unto God with the voice of triumph: for the Lord most high is terrible, he is a great king over all the earth." "Oh give thanks unto the Lord for he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever." "Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men," &c. "Praise ye the Lord, praise ye the Lord from the heavens."

From the above cursory survey of the religious principles of the Jewish nation, we perceive, that they were exactly the same with those which we have proved to be conformable to the dictates of reason, in its severest scrutinies; and so essential to the interests of man-

kind. These principles pre-eminently distinguish the Jewish dispensation. They filled and elevated the minds of their poets and their prophets; inspiring them with strains of devotion which have never been equalled, and which cannot be exceeded. How superior to the poetry of the heathens, when they attempted to celebrate their divinities! When these poets were the most successful, their excellence consisted in a brilliancy of thoughts, set off by all the laboured arts of composition; by which they manifestly attempted to honour themselves, while they professed to sing pæans to their gods. The devotional language inspired by the sublimities of true religion, immediately flows from the dictates of the Heart. The glowing expressions manifest a Mind filled with a sense of the matchless greatness, and unbounded goodness of their God. *Self* is forgotten, and as it were annihilated, before the throne of so glorious a being!

These exalted sentiments respecting the great first cause, were rendered perfectly familiar to a people, who were despised by all their contemporaries, and treated by the more polished nations as ignorant and illiterate slaves. They were carefully preserved among a people, many of whom, through the seductive influence of bad

examples, manifested, upon various occasions, a perverse disposition to worship the gods of their neighbours. Notwithstanding such deviations, although this people were so much inferior in the other branches of science, they eminently excelled in *theological* knowledge. They alone embraced and retained such sentiments of the great first Cause, as philosophy had never reached, and which it were extravagant to expect from the ignorant and illiterate, who had neither the power, nor the disposition, to abstract their minds from things mundane and sensual.

It was under a full conviction of the wisdom, righteousness, and benignity of the divine character and government, that frequent exhortations were given to the people, by their inspired teachers, to place their sole confidence in God. "Wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart; wait, I say, on the Lord." "I waited patiently for the Lord, and he inclined unto me and heard my cry." "It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man; it is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes." "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death; I will fear no evil; for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me."

We have remarked, that one requisite for the steady practice of virtue, from religious motives, is a full assurance that the practice of every virtue is acceptable to the Being whom we serve. Such a requisition was not ascribed to the heathen gods, by the generality of their worshippers; but it is evinced in every part of the Jewish religion. The strictest attention to virtue and morality is conspicuous in their civil code; in the repeated counsels and warnings of their legislators and prophets, and all the sacred writers; in the rewards promised, and judgments threatened; and in numberless events recorded in their history, illustrative of the execution both of promises and threats.

In the ten commandments, which were announced with awful solemnity from mount Sinai, we behold a summary of religious and moral duties, the exclusive worship of the one supreme, observance of his ordinances, and the practice of all the social virtues, emphatically enjoined. The various species of injustice are enumerated, and forbidden; Disobedience to Parents, Murder, Adultery, Theft, Malice, and Envy.

The civil and political institutions of their appointed legislator, Moses, indicate the nicest discriminations respecting the requisitions of

justice and mercy. The penal laws were as correspondent as the nature of the offence would admit, to the degrees of its *moral turpitude;* by which the practice of morality was invariably associated with obedience to the laws of the land; nor was a greater immorality committed by the legislator, in the undue severities of punishment, than had been committed by the professed criminal. The strict infliction of penalties, proportionate to the turpitude of the crime, became a great security to the honest and peaceable members of society, without perpetually exciting horror in the breasts of spectators, overwhelming the innocent relations of an offender with an accumulation of disgrace which HE did not deserve, or compelling compassion to abuse its generous nature, by conniving at every pitiful evasion, that the guilty may totally escape punishment, rather than be unjustly sacrificed by sanguinary laws.

Wilful Murder, Man-stealing, brutal and incorrigible conduct of a Son towards his Parents, Adultery, Idolatry, and Sorcery, unnatural Lusts, being enormities of the greatest magnitude, were considered as worthy of death. Some of these offences were totally destructive of the personal or social happiness of the parties injured; others, as Idolatry and Sorcery, were

rebellion against the sovereign ruler; an open and dangerous violation of that grand principle which constituted the basis of the Jewish œconomy—*the purity of religion.* Incorrigible Disobedience to parents was deemed rebellion against the representatives of Deity, as the sources of existence and support, as wise and affectionate instructors and protectors. The other crimes reduce the criminal to a level with the brutes, or sink him below them.

Culpable carelessness was punished according to the magnitude of the injury suffered, and the degrees of demerit in the offender. Thus, if an injury were accidentally committed by an Ox, the death of the animal taught the owner future care and discretion, and was a caution to those who were witnesses to the punishment. But "if the Ox were wont to push with his horns in time past, and it hath been testified to the owner, and he hath not kept him in," this inhuman and destructive carelessness was considered as equivalent to murder: the Ox was stoned and the owner put to death. Other instances of culpable inattention were also punished, with a just severity. "If a man shall open a pit, and not cover it, and an Ox or an Ass fall therein, the owner of the pit shall make it good, give money to the owner of them, and the dead beasts shall be his."

When fatal or pernicious consequences were produced by the indulgence of the angry passions, the offender was punished with various degrees of severity, according to the degrees of aggravation in the circumstances. In the commission of "wilful injuries, the law of retaliation required an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burning for burning, stripe for stripe." A false witness also was sentenced to suffer the evil which would have been inflicted upon the accused person, had his testimony received credit. "The judges shall make diligent inquisition, and behold if the witness be a false witness, and hath testified falsely against his brother, then shall ye do unto him as he had thought to have done unto his brother; so shalt thou put the evil away from among you."

In cases of Theft, the Mosaic laws did not place the value of an ox, a sheep, an ass, upon a level with that of an individual of the human species. They remained satisfied with the milder, more equitable, and probably, more efficacious penalties, of restoring threefold, fourfold, or fivefold, according to the degrees of criminality attendant upon the offence.

The strictest equity in commercial dealings is enjoined by the following law: "Thou shalt

not have in thy bag divers weights, a great and a small: thou shalt have a perfect and just weight; a perfect and just measure shalt thou have:—for all that do such things, and all that do unrighteously, are an abomination unto the Lord thy God."

In all their civil and municipal laws, the prevalence of wisdom and equity, united with mildness, is most conspicuous. The utmost attention was paid to the distresses of the poor and the debtor, in every injunction respecting them. The regulations to be observed at the season of harvest were kind and liberal. "And when ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not make clean riddance of the corners of thy field, when thou reapest; neither shalt thou gather any gleanings of thy harvest; thou shalt leave them to the poor and the stranger; I am the Lord your God." Again: "When thou cuttest down thine harvest in the field, and hast forgot a sheaf in the field, thou shalt not go again to fetch it; it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow; that the Lord thy God may bless thee in all the works of thine hands." "When thou beatest thine olive tree, thou shall not go over the boughs again; it shall be for the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow. When thou gatherest

the grapes of thy vineyard, thou shalt not glean it afterwards; it shall be for the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow."

The following prohibitions are replete with humanity: "Thou shalt not curse the deaf, nor put a stumbling block before the blind; thou shall not avenge or bear any grudge against the children of thy people; but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. I am the Lord." "When thou buildest a new house, then thou shalt make a battlement of thy roof, that thou bring not blood upon thine house, if any man fall from thence."

Every seventh year constituted a kind of pause in their secular concerns; and it had some degree of influence, to check the increase of that inequality to which there is a perpetual tendency, in all civil societies. The law to be observed every seventh year operated like a stated bill of insolvency. "At the end of every seventh year thou shalt make a release; and this is the manner of the release. Every creditor that lendeth ought to his neighbour shall release it. He shall not exact it of his neighbour, or of his brother. Because it is called the Lord's release." This law was only

obligatory towards a neighbour or a brother; the debt might be reclaimed of a stranger. According to the principles of equity, a claim of right might have been made in each case. The remission to those who were so closely connected, was rendered obligatory alone by the command of God; and the injunction was doubtless to strengthen the bonds of friendship, and of brotherly love. Yet in cases of great distress, a more remote connection than that of neighbourhood or fraternity, was sufficient to impose an obligation to benevolence. "If there be among you a poor man of one of thy brethren within any of thy gates, in thy land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not harden thine heart, nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother; but thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him, and shalt surely lend him sufficient for his need, in that which he wanteth. Beware that there be not a thought in thy wicked heart, saying, The seventh year, the year of release, is at hand; and thine eye be evil against thy poor brother, and thou givest him nought; and he cry unto the Lord against thee, and it be a sin unto thee. Thou shalt surely give him; and thine heart shall not be grieved when thou givest unto him." Regulations were also established respecting their domestic slaves, and the

prisoners taken in war, which breathed a genuine spirit of benevolence and humanity; having a tendency to meliorate a state which the complexion of the times seemed to authorize; and totally different from that unlimited power exercised by the heathen nations over their captives and slaves; or even by Christians in more enlightened days.

The commotions which such changes had a tendency to introduce, might have been very injurious, had not the intervention of a *sabbatical* year been instituted; preparatory to which the sovereign of universal Nature augmented the produce of the preceding year, to a degree sufficient for the support of the inhabitants during the seventh, in which those regulations were to take place.*

The Fiftieth Year, or the year of Jubilee, constituted an æra still more important. Its grand object was still more effectually to counteract those inequalites, as far as it was practicable, to which all human affairs are perpetually tending, from that diversity of talents and dispositions which characterizes humanity, and is productive of the most opposite conse-

* See Note D.

quences, in situations apparently similar or equal. "And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof: it shall be a jubilee unto you, and ye shall return every man unto his possession, and ye shall return every man unto his family." Hence it was ordained that the land should not be alienated for ever from the original possessors and their dependants; and that the equalization should be restored at stated periods, which had been adopted at the primitive division of the country.

According to the original law of Nature, the soil is common to every inhabitant on the globe; and all have an equal right to its spontaneous productions. The cultivation of the ground gives an exclusive claim to its produce; and it has finally terminated in an entire appropriation of the soil itself. To this state of things many public advantages are annexed, notwithstanding the apparent hardships of privation. Labourers, manufacturers, artists of various descriptions, become more expert and useful in their employments, than if they were universally compelled to till the ground for their sustenance. They are supposed to receive more than an equivalent, for this alienation of the ground they tread upon, through the means of a barter, or

from the pecuniary rewards of their labour; while the soil itself is rendered much more productive, by the skilful management of those whose time and attention are entirely devoted to the object. But the dispositions and conduct of different men, and the various contingencies in life, inevitably prevent a permanent adjustment of the balance. In a series of years a nation divides into the three orders of the rich, the middling class, and the poor. The former become proprietors of immense wealth; and without well-regulated minds, they will employ the power which accompanies wealth, in acts of tyranny and oppression. The latter are deprived of every thing but the air they breathe, and the water they drink; and they are thrown upon the charity of those, by whom, in the course of human events, they may have been supplanted. The year of Jubilee was appointed to counteract these pernicious effects, to a considerable degree, without invading the property of individuals. As it was universally known that every man would return to his property, and every man to his family, in the space of fifty years, the price of land was regulated accordingly. "If ye sell ought to thy neighbour, or buy ought of thy neighbour's land, ye shall not oppress one another; according to the number of years after the jubilee thou shalt buy

of thy neighbour, and according to the number of years of the fruits he shall sell unto thee; according to the multitude of years thou shalt increase the price thereof, and according to the fewness of the years thou shalt diminish the price thereof," &c. &c. These regulations, however, were confined to landed property. Whoever sold a house in a walled city, if it were not redeemed within the year, it was alienated for ever. "If it be not redeemed within the space of a full year, then the house that is in the walled city shall be established for ever to him that bought it, throughout his generations; it shall not go out in the jubilee. But the houses of the villages which have no walls round about them, shall be considered as the fields of the country"—doubtless because they were destined for the habitations of husbandmen;—"they may be redeemed, and they shall go out in the Jubilee." But in respect to the possessions of the Levites the rule was inverted. "The cities of the Levites, and the houses of the cities of their possession, may the Levites redeem at any time; and if a man purchase of the Levites, then the house that was sold, and the city of his possession shall go out in the year of the Jubilee, for the houses of the cities of the Levites are their possession among the children of Israel. But the field of the suburbs

of their cities may not be sold; for it is their perpetual possession."

Hence it appears that the Levites were permitted as individuals, to possess private property in the cities, upon terms more advantageous than those granted to the laity, but not to possess landed estates. These were the exclusive property of laymen for the term of forty-nine years; the tenth of their produce alone belonging to the priest-hood. Thus was the wealth obtained by the care and œconomy of individuals of this order peculiarly respected, while the prohibition to possess landed property effectually prevented the too great accumulation of wealth, so injurious to that devotional spirit, which was the highest ornament of their sacred character. It interposed a barrier also to the worldly aggrandizement of the priest-hood, as a distinct and separate body.

We do not mean to insinuate that similar regulations could, in every respect, be adopted by other communities. The people of Israel, upon their taking possession of the land of Canaan, were divided into distinct tribes, having a certain portion of land allotted to each; and these tribes were subdivided into various families, whose names and peculiar rights, were accurately registered and carefully preserved. It was not therefore

impracticable, or even difficult, at the expiration of forty-nine years, to restore landed property to the original owners, or to their immediate successors, whatever alienations might have taken place in the intermediate time. The wisdom, equity, and benevolence of this arrangement, where it was practicable, are very obvious. It checked the habitual oppression to which the inferior class are exposed by the exorbitantly rich, particularly at the earlier and less civilized period of society; and it relieved the poor and the slave, from perpetually remaining in a state of subjection and bondage. It restored their patrimony to those families which had been deprived of it, by the misfortune, folly, or injustice of their predecessors. It renewed to each individual the power of enjoying a comfortable subsistence, and gave him the opportunity of returning to a more respectable class of citizens, from which he had been unfortunately ejected. These ordinances being the established law of the nation, from the commencement of their civil existence, the occupiers of land, at the year of jubilee, could no more feel the injustice of being compelled to yield up their tenure, than the tenant in modern days, when he relinquishes the occupation of a leasehold estate at the end of the term.

The return of every family to its patrimony at these stated periods, was also admirably calculated to increase their attachment to their native soil; and thus prevent those emigrations to which they might otherwise have been disposed by poverty, internal troubles, or foreign enticements. The institution of a jubilee, therefore, co-operated with various other means of preserving the Jewish nation as a distinct people, for the future plans of Providence.

A revolution of so great a magnitude must necessarily place the whole nation in a state of disorder, before the rights of property could be accurately ascertained, and re-possession enjoyed through every branch of the community. The cultivation of land, during this season, must be exposed to neglect. For they who were about to relinquish, could not be expected to labour for the succeeding occupiers; nor could the latter claim any right to an anticipation, or enter upon the property of another for the purpose of tillage, before the appointed period. The God of Order therefore promised, as in the Sabbatical year, that the year preceding that of the jubilee should be peculiarly productive, and abundantly supply their wants, until order should be restored. Thus did he manifest his munificence, and fortify their belief in the existence of a God, who had

universal nature under his controul, in opposition to the seductive influence of Idolatry.

The provision made for the Ministers of religion was equitable and competent. It gave them a claim which placed them above a state of dependence, and the temptations to mean and servile connivances, which are peculiarly inconsistent with the character of those who are appointed to be the patterns of every virtue. But it was not sufficient to produce the indolence and carelessness incidental to affluence. It was ordained, that their Priests should live by the altar. They were prohibited from sharing in the partition of lands; and they were strictly commanded to officiate in their profession themselves. They had a divine right to the tenths of the offerings from the people; and the people had the divine right to demand their immediate services. "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Thus speak unto the Levites, and say unto them, When ye take of the children of Israel the tithes which I have given you from them for your inheritance, then ye shall offer up an heave offering of it to the Lord, even a tenth part of the tithe, and this your heave offering shall be reckoned unto you, as though it were the corn of the threshold floor, and as the fulness of the wine press," &c. "Therefore ye shall say unto them, when ye have

heaved the best thereof from it, then it shall be counted unto the Levites as the increase of the threshing floor, and as the increase of the wine press, and ye shall eat it in every place, ye and your households; for it *is your reward for your services, in the tabernacle of the congregation.*"

The above epitome, concise and imperfect as it is, will be sufficient to manifest the equitable spirit of the Jewish laws, and the strict attention paid to moderation and clemency, in their penal code; as far as was consistent with the purposes of government. Therefore the strict injunction, "thou shalt not spare, thou shalt not pity," those whom the laws condemned, had the essential good of the community for its object. Where laws are wise and temperate, they cannot be too punctually executed. Clemency and pitiful evasions form a league with the offender, to the prejudice of that public whom the laws professedly protect.

The precepts of Morality were also strongly enforced, by many individuals in the Jewish nation, who were not in the legislative character. Their accurate observations upon men and

manners, upon conduct, and the consequences of conduct, were numerous and striking. Most of these were formed into moral aphorisms, and pious sentences; which, for their justice and poignancy, are the admiration of the present day. Those actions and dispositions which, in modern times, are characterised by *virtue* and *vice*, and *virtuous* and *vicious*, are uniformly spoken of in the Scriptures as Righteousness, Uprightness, Holiness, or as *sinful* and *wicked*.

It was remarked, in our analysis of virtuous Conduct, that we usually apply the terms *prudent* and *imprudent*, to many actions which chiefly respect personal accommodations or personal injuries; to these also we in general confine the terms *Wisdom* and *Folly*. In the Jewish system, the presence, the influence, the favour or displeasure of the Universal Ruler, are incessantly placed before the eyes of the people. Hence it is that every branch of Virtue is considered as the highest *Wisdom*, and vice is always deemed synonymous with the extreme of *Folly*; for by the former, all the advantages flowing from obedience were perfectly secured; and by the latter, the miseries flowing from the Divine displeasure were assuredly incurred.

The moral Writers among the Jews have not left a single virtue, either personal or social,

without a comment upon the excellences and advantages of the one, or loading the other with disgrace and ignominy. We shall adduce a few specimens, in confirmation of the assertion.

The grand and comprehensive duty of Self-government, is repeatedly enforced. "He that hath no rule over his own spirit, is like a city that is broken down and without walls." Keep thine heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life." "He that is slow to anger, is of great understanding; but he that is hasty of spirit exalteth folly." "When wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant to thy soul, discretion shall preserve thee, and understanding shall keep thee."

The virtue of Patience is frequently recommended. "My son despise not the chastening of the Lord, neither be weary of his correction; for whom the Lord loveth he correcteth, even as a father the son in whom he delighteth." "If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small," &c.

The virtue of Contentment is strongly recommended in the prayer of Agur: "Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me," &c.

Resignation is generally expressed by *trusting* in the Lord. "I will trust in the mercy of the

Lord for ever and ever." "Although he *slay* me I will trust in the Lord." "None that trust in the Lord shall be desolate."

The injunctions to *rejoice* in the protection of Providence are innumerable. "Ye shall rejoice in all that ye put your hands unto, ye and your household wherein the Lord thy God hath blessed thee." "Thou shalt rejoice in every good thing which the Lord thy God hath given unto thee, and unto thine house."

Pride and Arrogance are censured with the utmost severity, and the contrary virtues of Humility and Modesty are highly extolled. "What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God." "Before honour is humility." "Let another praise thee, and not thine own mouth, a stranger and not thine own lips." "Seest thou a man that is wise in his own conceit? there is more hope of a fool than of him." "The fear of the Lord is to hate evil, pride and arrogance, and the evil way of the froward man doth he hate."

The duty and advantages of Industry, Temperance and Chastity, are also enforced and exemplified in pointed language. "The soul of the sluggard desireth and hath nothing, but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat." "Seest thou a man that is diligent in busi-

ness, he shall not stand before mean men." "Go to the ant thou sluggard, consider her ways and be wise." "Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging, and whoever is deceived thereby is not wise." "Be not thou among the wine-bibbers, among the riotous eaters of flesh; for the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty. Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contention? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without a cause? who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine. They that go to seek mixt wine." "The lips of a strange woman drop as an honey comb, and her mouth is smoother than oil, but her end is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword." "Say unto wisdom thou art my sister, and call understanding thy kinswoman; that they may keep thee from the stranger that flattereth with her words."

The social virtues of Discretion, Justice, and Benevolence, in their various ramifications, are frequently inculcated, with no less energy of thought and expression. "A soft answer turneth away wrath, but grievous words stir up anger." "The beginning of strife is as one letting out water, therefore leave off contention before it be meddled with." "He that answers a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him." "A tale bearer revealeth

secrets, but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter." "A fool uttereth all his mind, but a wise man keepeth it in till afterwards." "Debate thy cause with thy neighbour himself, and discover not a secret to another." "Withdraw thy feet from thy neighbour's house, lest he be weary of thee, and say I hate thee."

Integrity, and Veracity are strongly enforced: "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord, but the prayers of the upright are his delight." "Diverse weights and diverse measures, both of them are an abomination to the Lord." "It is not good to be a respecter of persons in judgment." "He that sayeth to the wicked thou art righteous, him shall the people curse, nations shall abhor him." "The lips of truth shall be established for ever, but a lying tongue is but for a moment." "Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord, but they that deal truely are his delight." "I am God, walk before me." "He that walketh uprightly walketh surely," &c.

Benevolence and Compassion. "Withhold not good from him to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do it." "A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity." "Rejoice not when thine ene-

my falls, and let not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth, lest the Lord see it, and it displeaseth him." "If thy neighbour be hungry give him bread to eat, and if he thirst give him drink, for thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the Lord shall reward thee." "Thine own friend and thy father's friend forsake not." "He that oppresseth the poor reproacheth his Maker, but he that honoureth him hath compassion on the poor." "He that giveth to the poor, shall not lack." "He that giveth to the poor lendeth to the Lord." "A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast, but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel," &c.

In every command a promise or a threat is implied, which distinguishes a command from advice, persuasion, or intreaty. Commands are issued by those alone who have power and authority to enforce; which, as we have already shewn, operate upon the passions of hope and fear. Whoever *obeys*, expects some future recompense for his obedience; and whoever *disobeys*, has to expect certain pernicious consequences resulting from his disobedience. Under the Jewish œconomy, the most powerful argu-

ments to the practice of Virtue were not deduced from its conformity to reason, or the beauty of virtue ; nor was a confidence placed in a natural love of justice, a benevolent disposition, or the great conveniences it affords to the social intercourse. The grand principle inculcated was the FEAR OF GOD. "Ye shall walk after the Lord your God and fear him, and keep his commandments, and obey his voice, and ye shall serve him, and cleave unto him." "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." "Stand in awe and sin not." Salvation is nigh unto them that fear him." "Let the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him." "Unto the wicked God saith, what hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant into thy mouth ?"

It clearly appears from the above extracts, that, according to the just conceptions of the Jewish Moralists, wickedness was not confined to the neglect of the Divine ordinances, or to open profaneness, but it extended to the neglect of *moral duties* also. All Vice in Scripture language is *wickedness*, and it is considered as an immediate offence against the supreme Legislator.

The promises or threats to the Obedient or Disobedient had, in the Jewish Dispensation, a double reference. Being a people under an hierarchical government, and the subjects of a Sovereign who has all nature under his controul, and can direct every event according to the good pleasure of his will, national prosperity and national adversity were continually placed before them, as the rewards or punishments of obedience or rebellion. After Moses, the chosen servant of the Lord, had instructed the people, by divine appointment, in the moral, civil, and ceremonial law, in a minute and circumstantial manner, so that no one could offend through ignorance, he promises in the name of the universal Sovereign, " If ye walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments to do them, then will I give you rain in due season, and the land shall yield her increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit, and your threshing shall reach unto the vintage, and the vintage shall reach unto the sowing time, and ye shall eat your bread to the full, and dwell in your land safely. And I will give peace in the land, and ye shall lie down and none make you afraid ; and I will rid evil beasts out of the land, neither shall the sword go through your land ; and ye shall chase your enemies, and they shall fall

before ye by the sword; and five of you shall chase an hundred, and an hundred of you shall put ten thousand to flight; and your enemies shall fall before you by the sword. For I will have respect unto you and make you fruitful, and multiply you, and establish my covenant with you. And I will walk among you and will be your God, and ye shall be my people. But if ye will not hearken unto me, and will not do all these commandments, and if ye shall despise my statutes, or if your soul abhor my judgments, so that ye will not do all my commandments, but that ye break my covenant, I also will do this unto you; I will even appoint over you terror, consumption, and the burning ague that shall consume the eyes, and cause sorrow of heart; and ye shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it; and I will set my face against you, and ye shall be slain before your enemies; they that hate you shall reign over you; and ye shall flee when none pursueth you; and if ye will not for all this hearken unto me, then I will punish you seven times more for your sins; and I will break the pride of your power; and I will make your heaven as iron, and your earth as brass; and your strength shall be spent in vain: for your land shall not yield her increase, neither shall the trees of

the land yield their fruits," &c. &c.—(See Leviticus, c. 26. and also Deuteronomy, c. 28.)—These chapters contain, as it were, a prophetic history of the future conduct of the Israelites, their obstinacies and rebellions, punishments, repentance and restoration to the divine favour.

Thus was worldly prosperity promised to this people collectively as a Nation; and the most dreadful calamities, to which a nation could be exposed, were threatened, should they prove wicked and rebellious. But numerous were the encouragements and warnings, pronounced to Individuals in their private character, according to the tenor of their moral and religious conduct. The rewards uniformly held forth to the Righteous, were the natural advantages derived from right conduct, the consolations of an approving conscience, respect among men, and the favour of the Almighty. The Wicked were repeatedly warned of the natural consequences of their folly, the disgrace they would incur in their social character, and the severity of the Divine wrath. "Great peace have they that love thy law, and nothing shall offend them." "Blessed is the man whose delight is in the law of the Lord, he shall be like

to a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth fruit in his season. His leaves also shall not wither, and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. The ungodly are not so, but like the chaff which the wind driveth away." "He that walketh uprightly walketh surely." "When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him." "The hopes of the righteous shall be gladness, but the expectations of the wicked shall perish." "A man shall not be established by wickedness, but the root of the righteous shall not be moved." "The memory of the just is blessed, but the name of the wicked shall rot." "Surely there shall be no reward to evil men; the candle of the wicked shall be put out." "The curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked, but he blesseth the habitation of the just." Wisdom is represented as expostulating with evil doers, "Behold I have called and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand and no man regarded, but ye have set at nought my reproofs; I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh as a whirlwind, when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me but I will not answer, they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me." &c.

It is a singular fact, that the promises and re-

wards to obedience or disobedience which are *explicit*, are entirely confined to *worldly* prosperity or *worldly* calamity; those that respect the moral conduct of Individuals are *general* and *indefinite*. This singularity has been adduced by a learned prelate as a proof of the divine legation of Moses. Since every other legislator was compelled to call in the aid of future rewards and punishments, in order to procure obedience to their injunctions, conscious that the powers of nature were not at their command, they ventured not to promise or to threaten what they could not accomplish; lest a contrary issue should discover the imposture. But although a reference to a future state of retribution did not enter into the system of the divine legislator Moses, it is obvious, from many occasional expressions of their devout moralists, that the righteous were in expectation of greater rewards than it is in the power of this world to bestow. The desire of future happiness is natural to Man exclusively. A conscious superiority of powers over every other animated being; the experience that sublunary good, when possessed, is not adapted to ensure permanent felicity; a perception that some characters and dispositions are far more exalted above the common level than their fortunes or enjoyments, and that others deserve

much greater evils than this world has inflicted; the remorse which accompanies great depravity, indicating a consciousness of danger, these all direct the attention to future scenes, and to future remunerations. Expectations of the kind were indulged by numbers among the heathens, under circumstances much less favourable to their hopes. It would have been strange if similar hopes and apprehensions, had not existed in the breast of the most considerate among the Jewish people, in the midst of the numerous promises and threats which surrounded them. Many passages might be adduced to support the opinion, that individuals *did* entertain the expectation. We may refer to some of those already quoted; as "the hopes of the righteous shall be gladness, but the expectations of the wicked shall perish." "There is no reward to wicked men, the candle of the wicked shall be put out." "Though a sinner do evil a hundred times, and his days shall be prolonged, I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, who fear before him, but it shall not be well with the wicked; because he fears not before the Lord." David says, "though I walk through the dark valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell,

nor suffer thy holy one to see corruption." Although this be acknowledged as a prophecy referring to Jesus, yet in its primary signification, it probably relates to the hopes of David, concerning futurity. The argument used by our Saviour to prove the resurrection of the dead, in his discourse with the Sadducees, is an inference which a pious Israelite would also be disposed to draw. "Now that the dead are raised, even Moses shewed at the bush, when he calleth the Lord the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, for he is not a God of the *dead* but of the *living*. The phrase frequently used expressive of death is, being *gathered to the people.* Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, were *gathered to their people.* "Aaron shall be gathered to his people, for he shall not enter into the Land," &c. "And the Lord said unto Moses—thou also shalt be gathered to thy people, as Aaron thy brother was gathered. All that generation were gathered to their fathers, &c." This kind of phraseology has no reference to their being deposited in the same cemetery, which might confine its signification to an assemblage of individuals, of the same community, in the *grave.* It is applied to persons who died in different ages, and at remote distances from each other; and naturally conveys the idea of a *deposit* against a

future resurrection. "Thy dead shall live," says the prophet Isaiah, "together with my dead body, shall they arise. Awake and sing ye that dwell in the dust, for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead."* The following singular passage is in the prophecy of Ezekiel. "Then he said unto me, son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. Behold they say our bones are dried, and our hopes are lost; we are cut off for our parts. Therefore prophecy and say unto them, thus sayeth the Lord God; Behold O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel; and ye shall know that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves, and brought you up out of your graves; and shall put my spirit in you, and I shall place you in your own land.†" Again, "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: Oh death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction; repentance shall be hid from my eyes."‡ To this passage St. Paul obviously refers in his exulting exclamation, Oh death, &c. These remarkable expressions being uttered in

* Isaiah xxvi. 19.

† Ezek. xxxvii. 11. See also the preceding verses.

‡ See Hosea xiii. 14.

prophetic language, which in general is highly figurative, and being associated with declarations which obscure their specific meaning, the mind is at a loss in what manner immediately to apply them. But they are calculated to inspire the strongest hopes that some extraordinary events will take place, as a blessing to the righteous, far surpassing all that worldly prosperity can bestow. The frequent exhortations to "trust in the Lord, to put their confidence in the God of their salvation," the assurances given to this people that "the mercy of God endureth for ever, that he hath no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but had rather that he would return and live," appear to have a much higher reference than to sublunary good; they must have had a tendency to encourage and strengthen the desire of future bliss so natural to man. The Jewish history informs us accordingly, that when their speculative philosophers were divided into two leading sects, the Sadducees alone were sceptics, but the Pharisees, who were the most numerous, were believers in a future state.

The fundamental principle of all religions indiscriminately, is OBEDIENCE; a conformity of conduct to the will and mandates of the Being

worshipped. This principle was very conspicuous in those cruel and infamous rites practised by the heathen world, in order to obtain the favour of their imaginary deities; Rites which opposed every natural feeling of the heart. Enlightened worshippers of the true God, are well assured that his injunctions are not arbitrary, capricious, and selfish; like the supposed mandates of those to whom human passions and depravations were ascribed. The obedience demanded by the universal governor, is conformable to the rule of right, which has for its basis the diffusion of well-being. Such a character cannot be bribed into reconciliation and complacency, by the most costly sacrifices, or by any voluntary sufferings, as *substitutes* for obedience to his moral laws. The Pagans, who were not favoured with a revelation, had no other guide than their own vague conceptions, respecting the service which might prove acceptable to their supposed divinities; and they were solely actuated by such hopes and fears as were excited by their own superstitious notions; or at most by the imperfect and glimmering light of nature. Those who enjoy an immediate revelation from heaven, not only know what services are demanded of them, but their hopes are encouraged by express promises, and their

fears alarmed by explicit denunciations. It is therefore expected that a conviction of religious truths should be productive of unreserved obedience. A transgression of the divine commands, is an incontestable mark of ungovernable propensities, culpable inattention, incredulity respecting the threatenings, or a want of confidence in the promises of God. Hence it is that the Jewish people, were so frequently and so severely reproached for their unbelief, "Ye rebelled against the commandment of the Lord your God; and ye believed him not, nor hearkened to his voice." "A fire was kindled against Jacob, and anger also came up against Israel, because they believed not in God, and trusted not in his salvation."*

In conformity to such principles, and such declarations, and to evince that "the word which is gone out of the mouth of the Lord shall not return," the sacred historian has recorded numerous instances of the accomplishment both of promises and of threatenings; in which the Disobedience of individuals has been repeatedly productive of the severest chastisement, and Obedience has received the most signal eviden-

* Deut. ix. 23. Ps. lxxviii. 21, 22. See the whole of this Psalm.

ces of the divine approbation. Of these facts we shall adduce a few examples.

The first instance of a just and wise severity against Disobedience, is recorded in the history of our first Parents; whose rebellious conduct has spread its influence over all their posterity, and introduced a new arrangement in the divine administration. *Death*, the hated enemy of man, which destroys his plans, terminates his prosperity, inspires him with dread whenever it arrests his attention, was introduced into the world by *Disobedience*. The prohibition was "of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, ye shall not eat of it;" the threatening, "for in the day that ye eat thereof ye shall surely die." Whatever explanation may be given to some particulars in this narrative of Moses, concerning the transgression of Adam, whether they are to be received in a literal, or in an allegorical sense, the grand truth remains the same. He *transgressed*. His guilt consisted in *disobedience to a command*. Whatever Ideas we may entertain concerning the knowledge of good and evil, the sin consisted in its being *unlawfully* obtained. There is also a great diversity in the sentiments of men concerning this *Death*. By some it is supposed to signify absolute annihilation; an irrecoverable extinc-

tion of being, such as, in the general opinion, is the destination of the inferior animals. According to some, it is a suspension of vitality, a total cessation of consciousness; inactivity in every natural, intellectual, and moral power: It has been considered as the separation of the immortal and spiritual part of man, from that which is material and perishable; the soul or conscious principle still possessing a separate existence, and powers of reflection in an unknown state: Some have imagined that by Death, in the language of scripture, is to be understood a state of permanent misery to the wicked. This diversity of opinions principally arises from the different theories that have been entertained, concerning the nature of the human soul, and the absolute irremediable demerit of sin. These theories, being venerated by their supporters as first principles, the explanations given of particular expressions, have always been conformable to them. However, the *Death* that was threatened and introduced into the human race, is, according to every theory, a destruction of that very interesting connection which subsists between human beings, and the present system of things. In consequence of this law of dissolution, Men, as well as all animal and vegetable productions, experience a

rapid succession in existence, instead of that permanency of duration which is ascribed to superior orders of beings. The sentence was intended to operate as a punishment to the offender. It was a threatening which terrified our first parents; and whatever may be the speculative opinions adopted concerning the nature of the soul, or a state of future existence, a painful uncertainty, and anxious doubts, are diffused over the whole human race, respecting our future destination.

The second offence recorded, is the sin of *fratricide.* It proceeded from the evil spirit of envy in Cain, who was "very wroth," because the sacrifice of his brother Abel was such as rendered it acceptable to the Lord, while his own was rejected. He was sentenced to be "a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth."

"Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him."

In the destruction of mankind by the universal flood, the piety of Noah not only preserved him and his family from the general ruin, but he had the distinguished honour of being the parent of a new race of inhabitants. "Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord." "He was a just man, and perfect in his generation; and Noah walked with God." Concerning the ex-

cellency of his faith, St. Paul thus speaks. "By faith Noah, being warned of God, of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith."*

The very shameful behaviour of Ham towards his father, as it marked his character at an early period, so was it introductory to that depravity of manners which characterised the descendants of his son Canaan; and it was doubtless the occasion of that subsequent state of degradation which Noah had predicted; while the superior virtues of Shem and Japheth, descending to their posterity, entitled them to the blessings pronounced. "And he said, cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren. And he said, blessed be the Lord God of Shem, and Canaan shall be his servant. And God shall enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant.†

In the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, the divine wrath was manifested against the extreme wickedness of the inhabitants; but the love of righteousness was most conspicuous in the preservation of Lot and his family; and also in the declaration that had there been ten righ-

* Heb. xi. 7. † Gen. ch. ix. 25, 26.

teous men, the cities should have been spared for their sakes.

To the signal faith of Abraham is ascribed the honour of his being the father of a race, through whose means all the nations of the earth are to be blessed. When mankind were rapidly degenerating into idolatry, he continued stedfast in the worship of the true God. At the divine command, he quitted his native country, to dwell in the land of Canaan. "By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country." But a severer conflict awaited him. Deeply impressed with a sense of duty, he prepared to offer up his only son Isaac. He was now placed in a situation the most extraordinary and unparalleled; the act was revolting both to the parental affections, and to the feelings of humanity. The injunction seemed to be in direct contradiction to the promise which had been repeatedly made, that "in his seed should the nations be blessed." But he conceived it to be his duty, and he resolved to obey; "accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead." As Adam was placed in a state of trial, by which, in case of

obedience, he might have been the happy progenitor of an immortal race, although he rendered himself unworthy of the honour, by having been subdued in the conflict, thus upon Abraham was enjoined a command, apparently more severe and difficult, yet he was found faithful; and upon him was conferred the honour of being the progenitor of the second Adam.

Isaac and Jacob also kept themselves uncontaminated by the profligacies and idolatrous rites of their surrounding neighbours. They manifested a zeal for the worship and service of the true God, and they were associated with their father Abraham in the patriarchal honours.

The chastity of Joseph, the integrity of his moral principles, and his piety towards God, in scenes the most trying and the most distressing, were introductory to the subsequent eminence of his station; which enabled him to save the lives of multitudes, during several years of famine, and to become a blessing and consolation to his aged parent, with his numerous family.

On the other hand, the perverse obstinacy of Pharoah, in not permitting the children of Israel to depart, after the repeated applications of Moses, supported by the manifestations of a miraculous power, was the occasion of the various calamities inflicted upon the Egyptians; and

the final destruction of himself and his numerous hosts in the Red sea.

When the discouraging reports made by the Spies, which represented the conquest of the country as impracticable, excited a spirit of rebellion among the people, who formed plans of revolt, saying one to another, "let us make a captain and let us return unto Egypt," we are told that the Almighty was incensed against the rebellious race; and as a punishment for their unbelief not an individual of them was permitted to enter the promised land, excepting Caleb, and Joshua their subsequent leader. "Because all those men which have seen my glory, and my miracles which I did in Egypt, and in the wilderness, have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice, surely they shall not see the land which I sware unto their fathers; neither shall any of them that provoked me see it: but my servant Caleb, because he hath another spirit with him, and hath followed me fully; him will I bring into the land, whereinto he went, and his seed shall possess it."

The destruction of three thousand men, who compelled Aaron to make a golden calf, to go before them in the absence of Moses, and the plague which followed; the destruction of

Nadab and Abihu for offering strange fire, although they were the sons of Aaron; the destruction of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, with their dependants, for open rebellion against the authority of Moses, in which not less than "two hundred and fifty princes of the assembly, famous in the congregation, men of renown," were concerned; and other acts of a similar nature, inflicted at different periods, were necessary manifestations how dangerous it is to disobey the commands of God.

Even Moses, the chosen servant, by one act which displeased the Lord, was not permitted to enter that Land, to the borders of which he had conducted the Israelites with such indefatigable zeal. He who had sustained so many conflicts with a perverse nation, and surmounted so many difficulties, in a moment of vanity, arrogated to himself a power independent of the Being in whose name he was appointed to act; and this had a tendency to withdraw their confidence in their sovereign ruler. When commanded to smite the rock in the desert of Zin, "Moses and Aaron gathered the congregation together before the rock, and he said unto them, Hear now, ye rebels, must WE fetch ye water out of this rock?" "And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron, because ye believe me not to sanctify me in the

eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I gave them."

To the various abominations committed and sanctioned, by that powerful and splendid sovereign Solomon, is ascribed the rending of the nation into two divisions, the total separation of the ten tribes from the house of Israel, and the shameful civil wars which ensued. The idolatrous practices commenced by Jeroboam, who led the revolt against the successor to Solomon, continued and increased by a quick succession of profligate kings, are declared to have occasioned the total destruction of this revolting branch, by their being carried captive into Assyria, and dispersed among the nations.

In relating the numerous events which succeeded to each other, during the space of several centuries, from the first invasion of the inhabitants of Canaan by Joshua, to the Babylonish captivity, one grand object of the sacred history is, to evince that every instance of success obtained by the descendants of Abraham over their numerous and powerful adversaries;—every instance of their defeat;—all the seasons of their national prosperity;—all their national calami-

ties, were perfectly correspondent, either to the degrees of their faith and obedience to the divine commands, or to their unbelief and disobedience. While they preserved themselves secure from being corrupted by the maxims and examples of the idolatrous nations, they were triumphant; nor did the largest disproportion in their numbers, prove an impediment to victory. Their deviations were punished in an exemplary manner: but to repent of their folly was to be replaced under the divine protection.

This subject constitutes so essential a branch of the Jewish history, that it will be resumed in a future section.

It is obvious, from several parts of their history, that it was not enjoined upon the Israelites, in the character of warriors, to deviate from those laws of war which were admitted as just and reasonable, through every part of the world. These sanguinary laws allowed, in many cases, of the total extirpation of the conquered countries, if interest or convenience demanded, or a spirit of revenge prompted to the execution. The most severe punishments of retaliation, were not considered as acts of cruelty, but acts of military justice. Every thing dear to Man, wives, children, every species of property, were at the sole

disposal of the conquerors; and a partial remission of claims which no one, in these happier days, would be entitled to make, was extolled as the excess of liberality. It was not the object of the divine Being, in the exercise of a peculiar providence towards the Israelites, to inspire them with transcendent virtue by a perpetual miracle; but to preserve uncontaminated, those religious and moral principles which should, in the ordinary course of his providence, ultimately improve the human race. However, it is expressly declared, that the Israelites were restrained from inflicting the horrors of war, in the manner wars were at that period conducted, until the iniquities of the inhabitants of the land should render them ripe for destruction. In the promise to Abraham, after predicting that his seed shall be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and they "shall serve them, and they shall afflict them four hundred years," it is added, "but in the fourth generation, they shall come hither again; for the *iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.*" When the important period was arrived, had the Israelites deviated from the usual laws of war, in this respect, the designs of Providence could not have been accomplished. It is, however, a great and triumphant peculiarity, observable in the legislation of Moses, and unknown in every other

leader, that the most delicate attention to the received principles of justice, was enjoined upon their martial bands. They were commanded not to invade any rights They never commenced hostilities. The nations whom they fought against were always the aggressors. Thus we are told that Moses sent messengers unto the king of Edom, when they arrived at the borders of his land, informing him who the people were, and what they had suffered, soliciting a passage through his country, and promising, "we will not pass through the fields nor through the vineyards, neither will we drink of the wells; we will go by the king's highway; we will not turn to the right hand nor to the left." Those who permitted them to pass unmolested, were treated with the good faith due to the confidence reposed in them. Although the Gibeonites, amazed at the marvellous reports that were spread concerning the Hebrews, and terrified at their power, obtained a league with them by the artful manner in which they imposed upon Joshua, the agreement was religiously observed until the days of Saul; and he was punished for a violation of it. When the surrounding nations resented the conduct of the Gibeonites, by which the combination against these dangerous strangers was weakened, and attacked them

as enemies, they were defended by the Hebrews with vigour and success. The descendants of Esau and Ishmael having retained, to a certain degree, the religion and manners of their pious ancestors, and not being as yet deeply contaminated by the gross idolatry of the neighbouring nations, were preserved, by the express command of God, from the calamities that awaited the more abandoned nations. "Command thou the people, saying, ye are to pass through the coast of your brethren the children of Esau, which dwell in Seir; and they shall be afraid of you, take ye heed unto yourselves therefore; meddle not with them, for I will not give you of their land, no not so much as a foot breadth: because I have given mount Seir unto Esau for a possession."—"And the Lord said unto me, distress not the Moabites, neither contend with them in battle; for I will not give thee of their land for a possession; because I have given Ar unto the children of Lot for a possession."*—These injunctions, replete with clemency, are a beautiful illustration of the declaration of God, that although he "visit the iniquities of the fathers upon the children, to the third and fourth generations, yet he will have mercy upon thou-

* See Deuteronomy, ch. ii. 4, passim.

sands of them who love him and keep his commandments."

Thus it manifestly appears to be a grand characteristic of this Dispensation, that it communicates a knowledge of the one true God, and of his moral attributes; enjoins the practice of every moral duty from a principle of Obedience; and presents us with numerous instances of exemplary rewards and punishments, according to the moral character, and religious conduct of his peculiar people.

CHAPTER II.

ON THE MANNER PURSUED BY DIVINE PROVIDENCE, TO PRESERVE THE DOCTRINES OF PURE RELIGION AND MORALITY AMONG THE HEBREWS, FROM THE CORRUPTIONS OF SURROUNDING NATIONS.

In the preceding chapter we have shewn, that under the Jewish Dispensation, it was an important object to inculcate just, reverential, and sublime sentiments of religion, and to impress upon the mind the grand duty of *Obedience.* It was also proved, that this obedience consisted in a perfect confidence in the Divine administration, unreserved submission to the Divine will, and a strict conformity to all the duties of morality: that is, in principles and dispositions essential to human happiness.

The Jewish people were instructed in the doctrines of religion and morality, in a manner, and to an extent, totally unknown to the Pagan world. As this people were, in the course of human events, to be perpetually exposed to all

the ignorance and vices of surrounding nations, and to the seductive influence of example, every expedient was employed to counteract the injurious effects of example, that was consistent with the primitive constitution of man; that might do honour to the freedom of his choice, and render all the offices of piety, and the practice of every virtue, the acts of a wise mind, and well-regulated dispositions.

The accomplishment of this purpose required a process which was to continue many ages, and to be conducted through manifold contingences, which might arise during so long a period. The nature of these contingent circumstances, and the manner in which the grand design was effected, now demand our attention.

The subject is extensive, and it consists of various branches, which, notwithstanding their diversity, have an intimate relation to the grand object. In treating it we shall observe the following order.

I. We shall consider the early state of the world, respecting Religion.

II. The selection of a particular family in order to prevent an universal apostasy from Monotheism, or the principles of true religion; and also the deliverance of this family from a state of bondage.

III. The religious Ceremonies instituted during the sojournment of the Hebrews in the wilderness ; their nature and object.

IV. The propensity of the Hebrews to Idolatry, and its causes : The nature and pernicious influence of idolatry; and the injunctions necessary to preserve this people from its fatal seductions.

V. The religious and moral character of the Israelites, under the different forms of government, with the correspondent consequences produced.

VI. The instrumentality of the Prophets of Jehovah, in the preservation of true religion.

VII. The Captivity of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, and its salutary effects in the final establishment of Monotheism in the land of Judea.

SECT. I.

CURSORY VIEW OF THE EARLY STATE OF THE WORLD, RESPECTING RELIGION.

It being the chief object of the sacred historian to treat of the theological and moral history of this selected nation, the events of several preceding ages are passed over in the most rapid manner. Hints are simply given of certain

facts which were introductory to his principal design. Nor is it practicable for any modern to fill up the large vacancies, observable between different periods, with conjectures of a satisfactory nature, by the deepest researches into antiquity. Yet these hints, concise as they are, furnish a clue which enables us to trace, with some degree of precision, the designs of the moral governor of the world, and the manner in which these designs are accomplishing. Where there is great obscurity, and doubtless for wise reasons an *intended* obscurity, thrown over the early state of mankind, it is indecent to substitute vague conjectures, or hypothetic doctrines, as absolute facts ; and it is dangerous to venerate the particular opinions of the wisest men, as if they were indubitable and historical truths, or the infallible oracles of God.

As the sacred history commences with the account of Adam's formation, and relates his disobedience and punishment, thus it presents us with some insight into his superiority as an intelligent and moral agent. We perceive, in this account, the distinguished honours conferred upon Man, in the very mode of his creation, as well as in his mental powers. God is represented as ordering the *Earth* to bring forth

grass, and the herb yielding seed, after his kind; and also cattle and creeping things: and the *Waters* to bring forth the inhabitants of the deep, and the winged fowl after his kind: but in the formation of MAN the *divine energy* is represented as being exerted immediately, without any kind of instrumentality; and "*God said let us make Man in our image, after our likeness.*"

We know of three very important characteristics of human nature, correspondent with these expressions. The dominion over every other sensitive being, and the power of converting the inanimate creation to an infinitude of uses; by which he imitates the Sovereignty of his Maker: his Intellectual Faculties; and his Moral powers; by the due cultivation of these—he is able to imitate his Maker in the still more venerable attributes of Wisdom and Goodness, and their concomitant *Felicity*. Of the precise degree of *Intellect* possessed by our first parents, and how far it transcended the powers of their offspring, we know nothing; for the scriptures have not informed us. Of their *moral Attainments*, and the sublimity of their *Virtue* or *Piety*, we are not authorised to say much to their honour. The restraint imposed upon them, in the midst of the most liberal grants, as a proof of their

Obedience, does not appear to have been peculiarly severe and difficult, and yet they failed. Indeed, it is not easy to conceive how, at the early period of their existence, they could have offended against any of the *moral* duties. From theft, extortion, fraud, intemperance, debauchery, their primitive situation totally exempted them. Falsehood and deceit, quarrels and contentions, are vices much too rude for the simplicity of their state, or the early endearments of social intercourse. Thus, in the very infancy of their being, it was scarcely possible for a natural temptation to exist. This peculiarity indicates to us the necessity of their being prohibited from the performance of an act, which was not in itself *immoral*, as a test of their OBEDIENCE. By the commission of the offence they fully manifested, that their sensual propensities were not restrained by motives of reason or of piety: They gave the reins either to a perverse appetite, or to a culpable curiosity.*

Better things could not be expected from their posterity. Without having recourse to vitiated propensities, communicated by the fall of their parents from a state of primitive innocence, and

* See the Layman's letters to Mr. Wilberforce, upon Hereditary Depravity, for a more ample statement of this subject. First edit. p. 56, passim. Published by J. Johnson, 1799.

admitting that the moral powers were, in every view, *equal*, it is natural to expect that the multiplication of the species, would be followed by a correspondent multiplication of temptations and desires. Oppositions of interests, and all the discordances incidental to the social intercourse, when the passions and propensities of numerous individuals were unrestrained either by reason, by a refined perception of social interests, or by the dictates of religion, must have given occasion to divers irregularities, immoral and destructive.

The second crime upon record is the murder of a brother; and this took place at a very early period. The crime we are informed, was perpetrated through *envy*; a vice which could not easily be propagated by the first parents in their Paradisaical state. This envy was excited by the tokens of respect paid unto Abel and his offering; "but unto Cain and his offering the Lord had not respect. And Cain was very wrath, and his countenance fell." The acceptance of the one, and the rejection of the other, manifestly arose from some *moral* cause, for it is added, "If thou doest *well* shalt thou not be accepted? And if thou doest not well, *sin* lieth at thy door."

We are further told, that the third son of

Adam was named Seth; that the son of Seth was named Enos; "then began men to call upon the name of the Lord." This remarkable expression naturally conveys to us the idea, that impiety was prevalent even at so early a period, and a distinction between the pious and the impious was commencing. In process of time, when "men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them, the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all that they chose." As mention is here made of the *sons of God*, in distinction from the *daughters of men*, and as it is said in the preceding passage, that men *began to call upon the name of the Lord*, these are intimations that the human race was divided into two separate moral characters; that large numbers of the inhabitants of the earth were totally destitute of true religion, or that they were gross idolaters; that a few were reserved, who for some time retained the principles of genuine piety; but that these finally became corrupted, in consequence of the seductive alliances which were formed with the profligate and irreligious. The human race at length became totally depraved. "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the

thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." And, according to the strong metaphorical language of Scripture, "it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. And the Lord said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth."

The representation given us of the state of morals before the deluge, and of the punishment which followed, justifies and illustrates our assertion, that when human depravity is arrived to a certain height, the mind will not make the necessary efforts for its recovery. Hence it appears that either the *destruction* of whole generations, not to be reclaimed by the influence of the usual Dispensations of Providence, or the exertion of a *miraculous power*, renovating the heart of man, by an immediate impulse upon every individual, were the only alternatives. To have followed the latter mode, would have been to repeal the important edict of man's free agency: The former afforded a solemn and salutary warning to succeeding generations. The destruction of every individual of the human species, that was not to be reclaimed by any natural process in moral discipline, appeared to the Divine wisdom the only effective method to clear the world of this moral pestilence. One family, which had

distinguished itself by its faith and piety, was saved from the general wreck; and this was constituted the medium of recovering the human race, by introducing a new æra in the divine government of the world.

After the Deluge, a distinction of moral character in the sons of Noah, soon became manifest in the conduct of *Ham*, towards their aged father, surprised into ebriety, contrasted with that of his brethren *Shem* and *Japheth*. These distinctions of character were also conspicuous in their posterity. *Canaan*, and the other descendants of Ham, being abandoned to idolatrous practices, much earlier than those either of Shem or Japheth.

SECT. II.

THE SELECTION OF A PARTICULAR FAMILY IN ORDER TO PREVENT AN UNIVERSAL APOSTASY FROM MONOTHEISM, OR THE PRINCIPLES OF TRUE RELIGION; AND THE SUBSEQUENT DELIVERANCE OF THIS FAMILY FROM A STATE OF BONDAGE.

From the line of Shem was *Abraham* descended, whom the Governor of the Universe

selected to commence the grand process, in favour of future generations. We are told that he and his family were settled in *Chaldea;* but by divine appointment they removed into the land inhabited by the *Canaanites,* under the promise that they should "become a great nation, and that unto his seed should the land be given." It is obvious that one cause of their residence in this country, was on account of its being nearer to the land of *Egypt,* by which the subsequent removal of their descendants into Egypt was facilitated; an event productive of the most important purposes.

Isaac, the son of Abraham, was also destined to be an instrument of carrying forward the plans of Providence. That he might not be contaminated, by the manners of the inhabitants among whom he dwelt, a wife was chosen for him out of the house of his ancestors, whose conduct was more exemplary. Isaac used a similar precaution respecting his son *Jacob;* commanding that he should not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan, whose characters were so profligate that Esau, his elder son, in his first marriages, "was a grief of mind unto Isaac and Rebekah," by taking the daughters of Hittites; and afterwards "seeing that the daughters of Canaan pleased not Isaac his father,

then went Esau unto Ishmael, and took unto the wives which he had, Mahalath, the daughter of Ishmael, Abraham's son."

Although Jacob was thus preserved from plunging into the sins of a perverse and idolatrous nation, yet it appears that the family of *Laban*, his father-in-law, was not perfectly free from the spreading infection. They began to worship household deities. Among other complaints against Jacob, he was accused by Laban of having *stolen his Gods*. Jacob himself was innocent of the theft, but his beloved wife *Rachael* was found guilty. The strength of the propensity to the worshipping of idols, in the family of this chosen instrument, is farther obvious from the narrative that "when Jacob fled to Bethel from the wrath of his brother Esau," he was obliged to make a close inspection into his household, and enjoin them to put away their strange gods that were among them. It was probably, for the purpose of eradicating a disposition to idolatry, that he erected an altar at Bethel, for the worship of the true God.

From among the children of Jacob, no further selection was deemed necessary. They were all admitted to the honour of being progenitors of a race that was to be separated from an idolatrous world, and to promote the impor-

tant plans of Providence; although the very immoral characters of some of them, manifested that they were undeserving of the honour.

The subsequent history of Jacob's family is replete with the most interesting information; and the concurrence of numerous events, some of which appear of a most discordant nature, to the promotion of one grand object, forcibly impress the mind with a conviction, that they were under the Divine direction. Consequences wonderful and momentous proceeded from incidents apparently frivolous. To the separation of the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, from an idolatrous world, that they might be a peculiar people who should profess a pure religion, be governed by wise and equitable laws, and preserved from the impious seductions of the nations around them, every thing was rendered subservient. The vices, the virtues of men, their good and bad dispositions, their prevailing customs and prejudices, co-operated with similar effect. It was the dream of a Child which became the occasional cause of a total change in the plans of this family; and prepared the way for their relinquishing a country where their principles would soon have been corrupted; as became too apparent from

the dissolute characters of several of Jacob's sons. The murderous designs of some of Joseph's brethren, which, if accomplished, must have destroyed the whole train of subsequent events, were overruled by the more humane, and the more profitable counsel of Reuben, which was most favourable to the grand object. A famine compelled the sons of Jacob to apply to the Egyptians for sustenance. In the eventful history of the injured, virtuous, and pious Joseph, we admire the extreme facility with which a path was opened, for the establishment of the whole family in the land of Egypt. This foreign country, which was the chief seat of polytheism, and in which, it was natural to imagine, that the Israelites would be peculiarly exposed to seduction, became the guardian of their religious principles. The strong prejudices of the Egyptians against the occupation of a shepherd, was the occasion of their having the *Land of Goshen* allotted to them. It was by the beneficial operation of these prejudices, that the descendants of Jacob were kept, for ages, totally distinct from the Egyptians; and they were thus preserved free from the contagion of Paganism, which they would never have been able to resist, had they experienced an harmonious intercourse. In this Land of Goshen, they prospered, multiplied, and

acquired a national character of their own. Their being despised by the Egyptians, would naturally excite strong prejudices against the whole nation, and render them less disposed to imitate their superstitions. Thus they retained the knowledge and worship of the true God, without being deeply contaminated, by the customs and manners of the most superstitious nation in the world.

After a long series of years, a Sovereign arose who became jealous of their numbers; entertaining apprehensions that at some future period, they might become powerful auxiliaries to the enemies of Egypt. According to the short-sighted policy of tyrants, who are always ignorant how to govern the human heart; and whose plans of security generally have a tendency to augment their danger, this man attempted to diminish their numbers, and restrain their power of becoming his foes, by reducing the Israelites to a state of the most abject slavery, and by issuing the cruel order, that every male infant should be destroyed. The excess of oppression, if it do not completely enervate, has a natural tendency to excite a re-action, productive of the most vigorous efforts to throw off the yoke. This natural propensity became efficient by the very singular preservation of their future legislator Moses, from immediate death. The sympathetic

heart of Pharaoh's daughter, counteracted the cruel plans of her tyrannical father; and through the instrumentality of her humane disposition, a Leader was raised up, whose natural abilities, improved by the most liberal education which the daughter of a sovereign could procure, peculiarly qualified him for the important and arduous commission he was destined to undertake. His being instructed, under the auspices of his patroness, in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, in union with the natural energies of his own mind, rendered him a proper instrument to be employed by the Almighty in rescuing an enslaved people.

The sacred historian proceeds to relate in what manner the release of the Israelites was finally obtained. The many interesting particulars in this narrative demand our closest attention, as they will lead to some important inferences.

When Moses was advanced to a state of manhood, "he went out unto his brethren, and looked on their burdens, and he saw an Egyptian smiting an Hebrew, one of his brethren," whom he slew. Being in danger of losing his own life in consequence of this action, he fled into the land of Midian, married Zephorah, a daughter of the priest of Midian, and continued with the family in the character of a shepherd, for the space of forty years; during which time the king

of Egypt died, who sought to avenge the death of the Egyptian that had been slain; but his successor was equally oppressive to the Hebrews.

While he was watching the flocks of Jethro, his father-in-law, in the desert by mount Horeb, Moses was surprised and terrified by a miraculous appearance, by which he was informed, for the first time, of the benignant designs of God towards the Israelites; and that *he* would be commissioned to undertake the arduous office of being their deliverer, from the yoke of oppression. He was ordered to return to his countrymen, assemble the elders, and inform them, that "the God of their fathers had appeared to him;" had manifested his commiseration at their distress, and his purpose to deliver them from servitude, and to replace them in the land formerly inhabited by their ancestors. Moses was assured that the Israelites with the elders would hearken to his voice, and that they should conjointly apply to the Sovereign for permission to go three days journey into the wilderness, to sacrifice to their God. He was also informed that the heart of Pharaoh would be hardened against them; nor would he attend to their supplications, until Pharaoh and the Egyptians should be fully convinced of the divinity of his mission, by the numerous plagues which he should be empowered

to inflict upon the land of Egypt: that finally, the grant would not only be obtained from the Sovereign, but the Egyptians themselves would facilitate the departure of the Hebrews, by accommodating them with raiment, and abundance of wealth.

The narrative further informs us, that Moses himself was incredulous and reluctant; and that he stated various impediments to his being acknowledged as a messenger from God. He was immediately enabled to perform a miracle for his own conviction, and he suffered a temporary punishment for his incredulity. The rod in his hand was turned into a serpent, and recovered its form; his hand became leprous and was immediately restored. The diffidence of Moses in his own qualifications induced him still to allege, that he was not endowed with the powers of speech competent to the design. This objection was removed by the appointment of his brother Aaron to attend him and be his spokesman, who was a man of eloquent speech. "He shall be thy spokesman unto the people; he shall be unto thee instead of a mouth, and thou shalt be unto him instead of a God, and thou shalt take this rod in thy hand, wherewith thou shalt do signs."

Moses thus convinced, commissioned, and

qualified, obtained leave of Jethro to return to Egypt, with his family. Moses and Aaron first went, and " gathered together all the elders of the children of Israel; and Aaron spake all the words, which the Lord had spoken unto Moses, *and did signs in the sight of the people; and the people believed:* and when they heard that the Lord had visited the children of Israel, and that he had looked upon their affliction, then they bowed their heads and worshipped."*

Having thus obtained the unanimous consent of the people, they delivered the message of the Lord unto Pharaoh, and told Pharaoh, "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, let my people go, that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness. But Pharaoh refused, saying, Who is Jehovah, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not Jehovah, neither will I let Israel go." He interpreted the application into an excuse for indolence; and he augmented the sufferings of the Israelites, compelling them to employ much of their time to gather straw, in order to make the usual tale of bricks, without granting a diminution of the number required of them as a task. This addition of servitude excited their resentment against Moses and

* Exod. c. iv. 29.

Aaron, as the efficient causes of it: who were thus placed in an embarrassed and critical situation. "Ye have made our favour to be abhorred in the sight of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of his servants, to put a sword into their hands to slay us." "And Moses returned unto the Lord and said, Lord, wherefore hast thou so evil intreated this people? Why is it that thou hast sent me? For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in thy name, he has done evil to this people, neither hast thou delivered thy people at all."

Upon a second application to Pharaoh, Aaron was empowered to work a miracle at the command of Moses, in his presence, and upon his requiring a miracle, as an evidence of their divine mission. "Aaron cast down his rod before Pharaoh and before his servants, and it became a serpent." "Then Pharaoh also called the wise men and the sorcerers; they also did in like manner with their enchantments."

It is possible that Pharaoh, imagining the imitations of the Egyptians to be real miracles also, performed by the power of his gods, interpreted them into a counter order, prohibiting the departure of the Israelites; the repugnance he felt to comply with the demand of Moses, would thus be greatly strengthened, and as it were respected as an act of religion. Nor did the obvious superiority of the miracle

performed by Moses, whose serpent swallowed up those artfully substituted in the place of their rods, by the sorcerers, appear to be of such importance as to change his resolution. His heart was hardened, and he would not let the people go.

The miracle which succeeded was of a more alarming nature; and it induced a punishment. "Aaron smote the waters that were in the river in the sight of Pharaoh, and his servants, and all the waters were turned into blood; the fish died and the river stank, so that the Egyptians could not drink of the river;" and they were obliged to dig round about the river to procure fresh water. The magicians are stated to have imitated this miracle also. From the nature of the case we may infer that the imitation must have been upon a very small scale; for as the waters in the river and in the streams, ponds, and pools supplied by it, were all turned into blood, they could simply try their experiments of deception by the water procured from the wells recently dug. Pharaoh might possibly ascribe the limitation of their power to this circumstance alone; and he still continued obstinate.

After the respite of seven days, Moses was ordered to renew his application, and to threaten

a miraculous, injurious, and irksome increase of frogs, that should come up and cover the land of Egypt. Upon the inattention of Pharaoh to the threat, it was executed in so severe a manner that he began to relent. For although this miracle was imitated by the magicians, yet "he called for Moses and Aaron, and said, intreat the Lord that he may take away the frogs from me and from my people, and I will let thy people go that they may do sacrifice unto Jehovah." The imitation of the Egyptians must have been very circumscribed, for reasons similar to those we have just mentioned; and Pharaoh now felt himself compelled to acknowledge the superior power of Jehovah. But upon the removal of the evil he refused to perform the promise.

In the next miracle, "Aaron stretched out his hand with his rod and smote the dust of the earth, and it became lice in man and beast, and the dust of the land became lice throughout all the land of Egypt." The magicians attempted to imitate this miracle in vain. It is probable that the nature of the miracle, rendered a counterfeit impracticable, as the minuteness of the object would destroy the power of deception. They were however obliged to confess their inability, which as naturally induced them to acknow-

ledge, " this is the finger of God." But Pharaoh continued obdurate.

When " a grievous swarm of flies was sent into the house of Pharaoh, and into his servants' houses, and into all the land of Egypt, and the land was corrupted by reason of the flies," while the land of Goshen was perfectly free, Pharaoh again relented. He was now willing to permit the Israelites to institute a solemn sacrifice to their God, *in the land.* This was not accepted, because it would be obnoxious to the Egyptians. " And Moses said it is not meet so to do : for we shall sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians to the Lord our God. Lo, shall we sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians before their eyes, and will they not stone us? We will go three days journey into the wilderness, and sacrifice to the Lord our God, as he shall command us." Pharaoh, under the impression of the moment, consented, upon condition that they should not " go very far away. Intreat for me." In conformity to the request and proposal, Moses said, " Behold I go out from thee, and I will intreat the Lord that the swarms of flies may depart." But upon their removal " Pharaoh hardened his heart this time also, neither would he let the people go."

The murrain inflicted upon the cattle was con-

fined to the Egyptians: "of the cattle of the children of Israel died not one." The boils also "which broke forth upon man, and upon beasts, throughout all the land of Egypt," and with which the magicians themselves were afflicted, were manifestly confined to that nation. But neither of these miracles subdued the obduracy of Pharaoh's heart.

When the devastation by hail and rain was threatened, the Egyptians themselves were admonished to avoid the impending storm, by driving their cattle from the fields. "He that feared the word of the Lord among the servants of Pharaoh, made his servants and his cattle flee into the houses: and he that regarded not the word of the Lord, left his servants and his cattle in the field." When "the hail, and fire mingled with the hail, very grievous, such as there was none like it in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation, smote throughout all the land of Egypt all that was in the field, and brake every tree of the field;" without injuring the land of Goshen, Pharaoh began to feel even the pangs of conscience. He was convinced that he had been trifling with Jehovah of Israel, and he deprecated his vengeance. "Pharaoh sent and called for Moses and Aaron, and said unto them, I have sinned

this time. The Lord is righteous, and I and my people are wicked ; intreat the Lord (for it is enough,) that there be no more thunderings and hail; and I will let ye go, and ye shall stay no longer." Thus under the impulse of terror he gave his full consent, without reserve. But no sooner was the calamity removed than his relucatnce returned, with all its force. "The heart of Pharaoh was hardened ; neither would he let the people go."

When the desolating swarms of locusts were threatened, and the miseries they should produce minutely foretold, the servants of Pharaoh were alarmed, and endeavoured to persuade their sovereign to comply with the demand of Moses. They said, "How long shall this man be a snare unto us ? Let the men go that they may serve Jehovah their God. Knowest thou not yet that Egypt is destroyed ?" He now sought an interview with these messengers of heaven, and proposed to let the *Men* go and serve the Lord, but insisted upon retaining women, children, and the flocks, as hostages for their return. But Moses said, "We will go with our young and with our old, with our sons, and with our daughters, with our flocks, and with our herds, will we go ; for we must hold a feast unto the Lord." The extent of the requisition enraged

Pharaoh, and they were driven out of his presence. But when the evil was inflicted, Pharaoh, under the pressure of distress, called for Moses and Aaron in haste, acknowledged his crime, and supplicated for mercy. Yet "when the Lord turned a mighty strong west wind, which took away the locusts, and cast them into the Red sea, the obduracy of his heart returned. This calamity was succeeded by "a darkness over the Land of Egypt, even a darkness that may be felt. They saw not one another, neither rose any from his place for three days; but all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings." Pharaoh now becomes more moderate in his demands, and is willing to permit men, women, and children to depart: "only let your *flocks* and your *herds* be stayed." Moses could not comply. He said "thou must give us also sacrifices and burnt offerings, that we may sacrifice unto the Lord our God." Our cattle also shall go with us; there shall not an hoof be left behind; for thereof must we take to serve the Lord our God; and we know not with what we must serve the Lord until we come thither." Pharaoh was so enraged that he drove them from his presence with a threat. "Take heed to thyself, see my face no more; for in that day thou seest my face thou shalt

die." Moses answers with an elevated and undaunted mind, well becoming the dignity of his mission; "Thou hast spoken well, I will see thy face again no more." But before his departure he solemnly announced the greatest calamity which can befall a people, and which was to terminate the contest. He depicted in striking colours its extent, and the universal consternation it should occasion; and he foretold with exultation, that they would finally be compelled to comply with his demand, according to its utmost extent. The passage to which these observations refer, is so important, we shall transcribe the whole.* "And Moses said, thus saith the Lord, About midnight will I go out into the midst of Egypt; and all the first born in the land of Egypt shall die; from the first born of Pharaoh that sitteth upon the throne, even to the first born of the female servant that is behind the mill; and all the first born of beasts. And there shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as there was none like to it, nor shall be like it any more. But against any of the children of Israel, shall not a dog move his tongue, against man or beast; that ye may know how the Lord doth put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel. And all these

* Exod. chap. xi. 4—9.

thy servants shall come down unto me, and bow down themselves unto me, saying; Get thee out, and all the people that follow thee; and after that I will go out. And he went out from Pharaoh in a great anger."*

Moses, by the command of God, prepared the Israelites for their departure, which he knew would be precipitate, instantly succeeding to the last dreadful calamity about to be inflicted upon the land. He ordered them to apply to the Egyptians, to give them such treasures as should be competent for their journey; "and the Lord gave the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians: for the man Moses was very great in the land of Egypt, in the sight of Pharaoh's servants, and in the sight of the people." This event was to constitute a new æra in the Jewish œconomy. "The month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year unto you." The passover was also instituted as a signal of safety; the manner of observing it was minutely described; and the space of fourteen days was allowed to them for a due preparation, and the solemn observance of the festival. They were to eat it as upon the point of departure, "with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; it is the

* See Note E.

Lord's passover. For I will pass through the land of Egypt in that night, and will smite all the first born in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and *against all the Gods of Egypt I will execute judgment. I am Jehovah.*" The feast of unleavened bread was also instituted, as a memorial of their hasty departure from the land of bondage. " And the children of Israel went away, and did as the Lord had commanded Moses and Aaron, so did they."

When the awful moment was arrived " it came to pass that at midnight Jehovah smote all the first born in the land of Egypt, from the first born of Pharaoh that sat on his throne, unto the first born of the captive that was in the dungeon; and all the first born of cattle."

A judgment so tremendous was irresistible. The passion of Dread now manifested its sovereignty, by subduing the most obdurate of hearts. An universal Panic seized the land, and they were as eager to dismiss the Hebrews as Pharaoh had been anxious to retain them. No further conditions were proposed; the permission, or rather the command, was absolute and peremptory; and the sovereign now implored the blessing of that Jehovah whom he had resisted and despised. " And Pharaoh rose up in the night, and he and all his servants, and all the Egyptians;

and there was a great cry in Egypt; for there was not a house where there was not one dead. And he called for Moses and Aaron by night, and said, Rise up and get you forth from among my people, both ye and the children of Israel, and go serve the Lord, as ye have said; and begone and bless me also." The Egyptians also were urgent upon the people, that they might send them out of the land in haste; for, "they said we be all dead men." "And the people took their dough before it was leavened, their kneading troughs being bound up in their clothes upon their shoulders." "For they were thrust out of Egypt and could not tarry, neither had they prepared themselves any victual."

The sacred historian informs us that the Israelites had sojourned in Egypt about *four hundred* and *thirty* years; and that during this period, their population had increased to about *six hundred thousand Men.* Thus it is probable that the number of these emigrants exceeded *two millions* of souls. It is said that a mixed multitude went up also with them, and flocks and herds, even very much cattle." It is natural to suppose that this mixed multitude consisted of Egyptians, Ethiopians, and others, who had be-

come subject to the dominion of Egypt. These people being struck with the miracles which had been wrought in favour of the Hebrews, were either converted from the worship of the Egyptian deities, or convinced of the great superiority of Jehovah, to the Gods whom they had served; and they were disposed to share the lot of a people thus wonderfully distinguished. These are the strangers to whom frequent reference is made in the subsequent parts of the Jewish history.

It was not the plan of Providence to conduct this people immediately into the land of promise, by the short and frequented way. During their bondage they could not have been trained to the use of arms; in their confused and undisciplined state, they could not have been able successfully to contend with nations inured to war, without a perpetual miracle; a regular code of laws and national institutes, could not have been planned and digested in the midst of warlike conflicts; nor had the inhabitants of Canaan filled up the measure of their iniquity; —therefore "God led them not through the land of the Philistines, though that was near; for God said, lest peradventure the people repent when they see war and return to Egypt."

This large, mixed, and unorganized multitude,

was destined to travel as one immense family, with their wives, children, flocks and herds. Their herds would supply them with milk and flesh, and the skins of the slaughtered beasts would afford a partial covering. Of grain and pulse, the supply must have been occasional, and in small quantities. They were to cross an arm of the Red Sea, without being accommodated with vessels of any kind, or with any natural means of making the passage; the road they were to travel in the wilderness was intricate; and the supplies of water very precarious; as certainly therefore as they were the chosen People of God, destined to inhabit the land of Canaan at a future period, so certainly did supernatural aid become occasionally necessary, or the most important ends could not have been accomplished.

The first miraculous interposition of high importance was, to guide their paths through the intricacies of a wilderness. This was accomplished by a cloud which preceded their course in the day, and by a fire that illuminated their path by night.

But a still greater miracle was requisite for their immediate preservation from the most imminent danger. When Pharaoh discovered that the Israelites had escaped from bondage, he

was enraged; probably at the apparent deception on the part of Moses, and certainly at his being robbed of so large a population of slaves; and he resolved to pursue them with a powerful force, to compel them to return, or to destroy them in the wilderness. The Israelites were sore afraid: "They cried unto the Lord for help," and upbraided Moses for bringing them into so perilous a state. The confidence of Moses in that Being, by whose command he had acted, was unshaken; and he said unto the people, "fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of Jehovah, which he will show to you to day; for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to day, ye shall see them no more for ever. The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace." The event was as he had predicted. A path was made for them through the Red Sea, by the means of a powerful east wind; while Pharaoh and his hosts attempting to make the same passage, the waters returned upon their disabled chariots, and completely overwhelmed them. A powerful, though a transient impression, was made on the minds of the people: for, "when Israel saw that great work which God did upon the Egyptians, the people feared the Lord, and believed the Lord, and his servant Moses."

The deficiency of pulse and grain, was supplied by their being miraculously fed with manna ; which was distributed to them in such portions as to inspire them with a conviction of their immediate dependence upon Jehovah. In the first months of their emigration, and while they were upon the march, it being impracticable to slay their cattle in such an abundance as to feed so large a number, they were miraculously fed with Quails. When they became stationary, this provision ceased ; obviously because they enjoyed the opportunity of slaughtering their cattle for food. But we are told that the supply of manna continued during the forty years of their abode in the wilderness. When they were again in motion, as they were passing through the desert of *Sin*, subjected to the impracticability of providing animal food from their own herds, they again had a supply of Quails. Because they had manifested a discontent at the provision of manna as a substitute for bread, they were punished by a superabundance of Quails : For subsisting upon animal food alone, without the usual corrective, they were afflicted with a pestilential disease.

That they did not enter upon the possession of Canaan at an early period, is ascribed to their cowardice and unbelief, as the moral and prohibi-

tory cause. But the Being who *can* and *does* produce very extensive good, from partial evil, rendered this delay productive of important advantages to the succeeding generation. As the increasing luxuries, and more dissolute manners of the inhabitants of the country, were rendering *them* the riper for destruction, thus the increasing multitudes of the Israelites, and the various hardships they suffered in the wilderness, to which the succeeding race were inured from the birth, produced physical effects most favourable to their warlike enterprizes, and rendered the enemies whom they were destined to encounter, more easy victims to their conquering arms.

SECT. III.

ON THE CIVIL AND RELIGIOUS REGULATIONS INSTITUTED IN THE WILDERNESS.

During their sojournment in the neigbourhood of mount *Sinai*, they possessed leisure to arrange and organize their moral and civil constitution; many particulars of which were enumerated in the former chapter. Their time and attention were also occupied in erecting, furnishing, and adorning the tabernacle, which was to serve as

an itinerary Temple. This seemed to be a popular employment; for they contributed so largely to the work, that Moses found it necessary to check their liberality. Every circumstance relative to the establishment of the Priesthood, the appointment of sacrifices and oblations, and the religious ceremonies to be observed, occupied their peculiar attention. Moses also, by the advice of his father-in-law *Jethro*, made such arrangements as alleviated his own burden, and facilitated the administration of justice. He " chose able men out of all Israel, and made them heads over the people, rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens. And they judged the people at all seasons; the hard cases they brought unto Moses, but every smaller matter they judged themselves." It is obvious, that ordinances and regulations so extensive and minute, demanded tranquillity and leisure. They could not have taken place amidst the tumults of war. The numerous rites and ceremonies in which these people were perpetually engaged, afforded a beneficial occupation to those whose situations entirely precluded agricultural employments, and confined those of manufactories and barter within very narrow limits. They had also a natural tendency to direct their attention to the grand object, *the service of the one God*;

that they might be the less exposed to the seductions of the nations, among whom they were destined to dwell. It is also possible that the splendour accompanying these innocent rites of the Hebrew worship, might make a favourable impression upon the idolatrous nations surrounding them.

But the various oblations and sacrifices incumbent upon the Jewish people, had also a *moral* influence connected with them, in opposition to the *immoralities* and *enormities,* practised by Pagans as acts of religion.

What was the Origin of Sacrifices is a question that has been much agitated. Without entering deeply into this question, we shall just remark as a fact, that in the ruder state of mankind, when objects of sense make impressions peculiarly strong, while refined and abstract ideas are scarcely known, oblations and sacrifices were the usual modes of expressing the *grateful feelings* of the heart, and also a *deep sense of demerit.* These sentiments being implanted in our nature, are common to all Religions. But as fearful apprehensions are much more frequently excited than a sense of favours conferred, thus have supplicatory or expiatory sacrifices, always exceeded the oblations of gratitude. When it became the prevalent opinion that the Gods

possessed human appetites and passions, ignorant minds conceived that their peculiar deities were actually regaled and fed by the offerings presented to them; and that the omission would be resented as a privation, not only of their rights but of their enjoyments. Sanguinary victims were peculiar denotations of *demerit*. They emblematically shewed the punishment which crimes deserved; that is, the loss of life with all its blessings: As such they were tokens of penitence. The depth of contrition was manifested by the value of the sacrifice; until at length *human* sacrifices, and the oblation of their *beloved offspring*, on the altars of their Gods, being the most valuable offsprings that could possibly be made, were considered as the most expiatory.

What was primarily devised as a *sign* of contrition, was afterwards considered as a true *expiation*, and as a *price* paid, equal in value to the supposed offence; and as the human heart is prone to every perversion that favours its lusts, sacrifices, and the strict performance of other religious rites, degenerated into *compromises* and *substitutes*. *Signs* of contrition were deemed equivalent to *contrition* itself; and a strict attention to forms and ceremonies of their own devising, was valued as a compensation for every moral defect.

The above remarks are founded upon the moral history of the human mind; they are confirmed by the practices of the heathen world; by those corruptions in Judaism of which the Jewish prophets loudly complain; and by numberless evidences presented to us in the history of the Christian church, of which there are too many remains even in the present day.

The inspired Legislator Moses, was directed to apply the innocent and laudable principles of the human mind to their proper objects, and to guard against the deviations and corruptions of ignorance or profligacy.

A close attention to the minuter regulations which respect the various oblations and sacrifices enjoined upon the Jewish people, discovers to us also that they had uniformly a relation to the *moral* character, or to the different degrees of *demerit* in the subject.

Of this we shall state a few instances. In the expiatory Sacrifices, where higher degrees of criminality were obvious, *burnt offerings* were commanded, in which the animal was *entirely consumed by fire*, with the utmost solemnity, one portion upon the altar, and the other

without the gates; whereas in *meat* offerings, for slighter offences, the beast was not entirely burnt, a portion of it was consigned to the Priests. In sins of *ignorance* and *surprise*, the sacrifices were not offered up with the degree of solemnity that was enjoined for wilful and deliberate offences. Again, as it was expected that the *Priesthood* should be more holy and circumspect than the *Laity*, their expiatory victims were ordered to be more valuable than those of the others. Thus, for the sin of Ignorance, it was enjoined upon the offending *Priest*, to bring a young *Bullock* without blemish, unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. "When a *Ruler* hath sinned, and done somewhat through ignorance, against any of the commandments of the Lord God, he shall bring his offering a *kid of the Goats*, a *male* without blemish." "And if any one of the *common people* sin through ignorance, he shall bring his offering a *kid* of the Goats, a *female* without blemish, for his sin which he hath sinned." "If any soul hear the voice of swearing, and is a witness and do not utter it; or if he touch any unclean thing," he is sentenced, by the mosaic law, to bring for a trespass offering, a *female* of the flock, a *lamb* or *kid*, or two *turtle-doves* or *young pigeons*, or an *ephah of fine flour*, for a sin offering, ac-

cording to his circumstances. But in the sins of ignorance which related " to the *holy things of the Lord,*" the offence was considered as of a deeper dye, and the expiatory offerings were proportionably greater. In *wilful* transgressions of a similar kind, the *Ram* that was to be brought as a trespass offering, was sacrificed with peculiar solemnity; and it was enjoined upon the officiating Priest to change his garments in different parts of the service. In those offerings which were not of an expiatory nature, but expressive of gratitude or dependence, no victims were to be slain at the altar: The meat offerings, and oblations of the first fruits, were not to be burnt on the altar. It was deemed sufficient that a very small portion of it should be burnt as a memorial.*

On the great day of atonement, when it was enjoined upon the Priest to offer up " the *Bullock* for a sin offering for *himself and for his house,* and a *Goat* as a sin offering for *the people,*" a peculiar ceremony was enjoined, as an emblem of their acceptance with God ; or as an assurance that their iniquities were pardoned. Its object was to attach the people the more strongly to the service of the true God, from a principle of gratitude; for it was a striking manifestation

* See Note F.

that he was merciful, forgiving iniquities, transgressions, and sins. When the Priest had made an end "*of reconciling the holy place*, and the tabernacle of the congregation and the altar," he was commanded to bring the living Goat, which was destined by lot to escape, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions, and all their sins, putting them upon the head of the Goat; "and thou shalt send him away by the hand of a fit person into the wilderness; and the Goat shall bear all their iniquities into a land not inhabited, and he shall let go the Goat into the wilderness, and the Goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities into a land not inhabited."

The above regulations and ordinances, may be considered in the light of cautionary means to preserve the Hebrews as a people, distinct from the nations that should surround them; having in themselves a beneficial tendency to counteract the propensity to imitate idolatrous practices, which was so prevalent among these people; and to render a compliance with the divine commands, uniform and extensive.

To these means of preserving upon their minds an habitual sense of religion, we may also add the numerous *Festivals*, instituted in commemoration of great and important events;

which, while they were expressive of gratitude in the existing generation, became interesting memorials to posterity, of those peculiar manifestations of the divine interposition, with which they were favoured. This was of the utmost importance to a people whose ignorance precluded an access to written memorials; while the exhilarations these festivals occasioned, impressed, through the influence of the social principle, those events the more deeply upon their minds.

But the observance of the *seventh Day* as a Sabbath, holy to the Lord, or as a day of sacred rest, was particularly enjoined upon them; and it was commanded that they should keep it with peculiar solemnity. On that day the heads of families, with their household, their slaves, their cattle, were to cease from every kind of labour: They were to assemble in a holy convocation; and it is probable, from the practices of the Jews recorded in the New Testament, that some portions of the law were read. The usual sacrifices were, on that day, to be doubled. "On the Sabbath day, (thou shalt offer) two lambs of the first year, without spot, and two tenth deals of flour for a meat offering, mingled with oil, and the drink offering thereof; this is the burnt offering of every Sabbath, beside the continual burnt offering,

and his drink offering."* To inspire them with the deeper reverence for its sanctity, a miracle was statedly performed on the day preceding the Sabbath, that it might not be profaned by their collecting of manna on that day. In the subsequent degeneracy of this people, the prophets frequently upbraided them with neglecting the Sabbath, as the source of their degeneracy; and to delight in it was the leading characteristic of a pious man. "Blessed is the man that keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it."§ If thou turn away thy foot from doing thy pleasure on my holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable—then shalt thou delight thyself, in the Lord, and I will cause thee to ride on the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father."‡

We are informed that the Sabbath was instituted to commemorate two great events; the cessation of the great Creator from his work, after the plan of creation was completed, at six distinct periods; and the liberation of this people from the bondage of Egypt. The celebration of these two events, with due solemnity, enabled them habitually to contemplate their Jehovah as the universal sovereign. It had a

* Numb. c. xxviii. v. 9, 10. † Isaiah lvi. 2. ‡ Isa. lviii. 13, 14.

tendency to check their perverse propensity to serve other Gods; to impress their minds with the deep veneration of his transcendent attributes; and to inspire every pious principle within them. It afforded them leisure to recollect their sufferings, and the sufferings of their ancestors under the Egyptian yoke; to cherish every grateful feeling for their miraculous deliverance; and also for the high honour conferred upon them, in their being selected as the peculiar people of God, from a depraved and idolatrous generation. The mind of man is, at all times, strongly impressed by sensible objects; nor is it in the power of mental culture to render us indifferent to their influence; but those who are uncultivated or grossly ignorant, will yield themselves up entirely to such impressions, if no means be employed, or opportunity afforded, to direct their thoughts into another channel. This people were minutely instructed in all the doctrines of true theology, and in all the duties of morality; but such instructions would have lost their influence, without frequent and solemn pauses for reflection.

At every period of the world, and in every nation where a religion of any kind was pro-

fessed, a belief of an intercommunication between the Being worshipped and his devout worshippers, was necessarily an article of the public faith; for it is essentially connected with the expectation or blessings, or calamities, rewards or punishments; so that whenever there was a persuasion of the influence or superintendency of these beings, some manifestations of their will were always supposed to exist. Hence the numerous tribes of Magicians, Diviners, Soothsayers, Astrologers, &c. that surrounded the temples of the heathen deities. These principles, so inseparable from the very idea of religion, were confirmed to the Israelites by the only living and true God; for his immediate interposition constituted the grand characteristic of their government. In whatever manner the communications were made, they were such as left no room for doubt upon the minds of the subjects. Noah was convinced that it was by the command of God, when he built the ark and prepared for the general deluge. Abraham knew that it was enjoined upon him, by divine authority, to quit his country, his kindred, and his father's house, and to go to a country which he knew not; and also to sacrifice his son. The occasional appearances to the other Patriarchs, Isaac, and Jacob, were accompanied with sufficient evidences to induce

them to act in a correspondent manner; and the events consequent upon their obedience, manifested the reality of the inspiration. The very important office to which Moses was appointed, with its various and complicated duties, rendered the frequency of a divine intercourse absolutely necessary; and the unparalleled wisdom of all his ordinances, testified that they proceeded from the fountain of wisdom.

To impress the minds of the Israelites with a deep sense of the worship due to the one God, and to him only, and of the obligation to practise every moral duty, was of infinite moment. These were the grand objects to which every other was merely subservient. On the observance of these duties the felicity of each member of the community, in his individual capacity, the felicity of the people as a nation, immediately depended; and upon these does the felicity of the whole human race depend. Therefore was the moral law promulgated from mount Sinai with peculiar solemnity. It was by the voice of Jehovah himself, without an Intermediate, and the people were struck with terror. "And all the people saw the thundering, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw it they removed and stood afar

off. And they said unto Moses, speak thou with us and we will hear; but let not God speak with us lest we die. And Moses said unto the people fear not; for God is come to prove you, and that his fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not."*

In every other instance Moses was the sole medium of communication, during the whole of his official character. Joshua was appointed to be his successor in the following manner. "The Lord said unto Moses, take thee Joshua, the son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit, and lay thine hand upon him, and set him before Eleazar the Priest, and before all the congregation, and give him a charge in their sight; and thou shalt put off thine honour upon him, that all the congregation of the children of Israel may be obedient; and he shall stand before Eleazar the Priest, who shall ask counsel for him after the judgment of Urim before the Lord; at his word shall they go out, and at his word shall they come in, both he and all the children of Israel with him, even all the congregation."†

The Supreme Being reserved to himself the right of revealing his will by the mouths of his prophets, or in whatever manner he pleased; whether it was to direct, encourage, admonish

* Exod. ch. xx. 18, 20. † Numbers xxvii. 18, 21.

or threaten; but when it was the design of the people, or of any individual among them, to ask counsel of God, it was ordained to be in a manner similar to the preceding. Application was to be made to the high priest, and an answer was returned from the mercy-seat. It was thus, that Moses himself asked counsel of God. "And when Moses was gone into the tabernacle of the congregation to speak with him, then he heard the voice of one speaking unto him from off the mercy-seat, that was upon the ark of testimony, from between the two cherubims; and he spake unto him."* After the death of Joshua, it was in this manner also that Israel asked the Lord, "saying, who shall go up for us against the Canaanites first, to fight against them; and Jehovah said, Judah shall go up, behold I have delivered the land into his hand."

Thus was provision made for the directions which their unsettled state, the multitude of their enemies, and their occasional embarrassments might require; the people were taught their dependence upon the God of Israel, and were rescued from the temptations to consult the fallacious declarations of the heathens, under a plea of necessity. The mode was simple, exempt from those superstitious rites and ceremonies which are a disgrace to human

* Numb. vii. 89.

beings. The answers were explicit and unequivocal; nor was it in the power of the priesthood to be guilty of delusion.*

SECT. IV.

ON THE PROPENSITY OF THE HEBREWS TO IMITATE THE IDOLATROUS PRACTICES OF THE PAGANS; THE NATURE AND PERNICIOUS INFLUENCE OF IDOLATRY; THE INJUNCTIONS NECESSARY TO PRESERVE THIS PEOPLE FROM ITS FATAL SEDUCTIONS.

WHAT has already been advanced is sufficient to evince the fact, that peculiar care was taken, and peculiar means employed, to collect, and preserve as a distinct class, a competent number of people, who should be able to maintain all the principles of Monotheism, in the midst of that polytheism which deluged the world; and our subsequent history will entirely consist in the statement of the various plans adopted by divine providence, correspondent to the dangers and temptations which these people were destined to encounter. The sacred pages inform us that, notwithstanding so many instances of the divine interposition in their favour, and the astonishing

* See Note G.

miracles wrought by the great Jehovah for their preservation, notwithstanding the care which was taken to train them up in a religion so infinitely superior to all others; no sooner had they approached the borders of Canaan, and begun to intermix with the idolatrous people who dwelt in its vicinity, than their propensities to imitate were invincibly strong; and through a series of many ages, the most coercive measures were necessary, to prevent their being absorbed and lost, in the grand mass of depravity. These circumstances render it necessary for us to enquire, whence this strange propensity could be derived? What was the peculiar character of the religions they were so prone to imitate? The evils, of which they were uniformly productive, and the preventives employed?

We do not learn from the earlier parts of the Mosaic history, that the Israelites manifested any particular predilection for the gods of the Egyptians, at the period of their emigration, notwithstanding the Egyptians were more superstitious than any other people, and idolatry had assumed a more systematic form among them: for although some objects of their worship were of the lowest order, others were held in the highest veneration, and their influence was deemed peculiarly beneficent and extensive; which was

particularly the case with their god *Apis*, whom they worshipped in the form of a bull.

It is obvious that the cause which compelled the Hebrews to live remote from the Egyptians, was, in itself, some preservation against the immediate infection of an example; yet their depressed state might have operated still more powerfully. They might have had little inclination to imitate a people by whom they were despised; whose oppressions they resented, and from whose deities they could not hope for deliverance. But, notwithstanding these impediments, there was a latent propensity, for the Hebrews were subsequently reproached by the prophet Ezekiel, for their attachment to the idols of Egypt.*

The first symptom of an idolatrous spirit, after their escape from captivity, manifested itself during the absence of Moses, when they were in the wilderness. The many and unexpected hardships they had suffered, frequently disposed them to lament their emigration; when he was receiving the Law in mount Sinai, they became apprehensive that their leader had forsaken them; and they compelled Aaron to make them a molten Calf; probably as a representative of the god *Apis*, to whom they wished to recom-

* Ezek. ch. xx. 7, 8.

mend themselves, and under whose auspices they entertained the design of returning to Egypt. "Up, make us gods that shall go before us; as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him." The return of their leader, and the severe punishment of the most froward, struck them with awe, and reduced them to obedience, until they approached the idolatrous nations, by whose example they were so easily contaminated.

Some have thought it incredible that any people so distinguished, could have acted in so absurd and perverse a manner, as the sequel of their history represents. But they who make the objection, have not been sufficiently attentive to the influence of sensible objects, when placed in competition with those of a more abstract nature. It is this influence which too powerfully operates among a people more highly distinguished than the ancient Jews. We daily observe that a professed belief in the existence, and moral government of the Supreme Being, united with the expectation of a future state of retribution, according to character and conduct, are not always sufficient to preserve men from the seductions of sense, and from those practices which are most correspondent with atheistical incredulity. But there are many

circumstances respecting the situation of this people, which, although they cannot justify their conduct, serve to explain it.

We should recollect, in the first place, that in the records of their history to which we have access, we are presented with an assemblage of facts closely connected together, and making as it were, one strong impression upon *our* minds, whereas the facts themselves occurred at different periods, and under incidental circumstances; so that many of the preceding facts would have been effaced from their illiterate minds, without the imperfect aids of rude pillars occasionally erected, and the repeated celebration of various commemorative festivals. Moses, who was conscious of his being under the immediate direction of heaven, spoke habitually of the divine commands and appointments, in the most common, as well as the more extraordinary occurrences. As he acknowledged God in all things, it was not necessary for him to discriminate upon every occasion, between the mediate, and immediate superintendance of God; between those events in which his more manifest, or his more secret influence might have been immediately exerted, and such as occurred according to, what we term, the usual course of providence. When their attention was not roused by some osten-

sible interference, and their minds deeply impressed by some very important occurrence, it is not difficult to suppose that the Israelites would relapse into that supineness, which Christians themselves are so apt to indulge; that is, into a total forgetfulness of the providence which, upon reflection, they acknowledge to be universally operative.

Nor should we omit the natural influence of, we had almost said, the sovereign power of example, acting repeatedly upon the human mind. Foreigners readily conform to the customs of the people among whom they reside. Even their primitive national prejudices, and the opinion of a superiority, finally give way to this influence. To feel as a stranger among the natives who are completely at home, is not a pleasant sensation; and this sensation is rendered, by the inhabitants, absolutely painful, where the subject does not manifest a disposition to conform. Respecting young minds, it is well known that paternal example, instruction, and authority united, are scarcely sufficient to prevent children from intermixing with the children of the natives among whom they sojourn, and adopting their principles, manners, and habits. In *their* successors the primitive impressions and characteristic differences are still more enfeebled; and

frequent intermarriages entirely efface the difference. Such has been the universal process, excepting among this nation of the Jews, whose laws and customs, after much coercion and long discipline, have finally placed them in an insulated state, wherever they exist. Before this habitual character was formed, their propensities operated like those of every other people.

But there is another principle, which we may justly suppose to have had its influence upon the Israelites. It was a prevalent opinion, in those early ages, that every minute event in life, was under the immediate influence of invisible agents. Indeed, this is always the theory of the ignorant. Where the laws of nature are totally unknown, every occurrence is ascribed to a superior cause; and where they are known in a very partial and imperfect manner, the mind is greatly disposed to conceal, while in reality it is exposing its own weakness, by attributing to a supernatural influence, whatever it cannot explain or comprehend. It was also a prevalent opinion, that not only every nation, but every province and district, had its tutelar deity. They believed in gods of the hills, gods of the valleys and groves, gods of the rivers and woods, gods that presided over war, communicated the blessings of peace; who inflicted or cured diseases; blessed

the land with fertility, or chastised it with barrenness. With these local deities, *strangers* as well as *natives*, thought it their interest to ingratiate themselves. Invaders were always solicitous to gain over the gods of the invaded country, as allies; and they thought no sacrifice or oblation too expensive, that might serve as a bribe upon such urgent occasions. This opinion being universally prevalent, it would have been a singular phœnomenon if the Israelites had remained perfectly exempt from its influence. The opinion was not counteracted by Jehovah the true God, by a specific miracle, performed upon every individual mind, but opposed by the preventives mentioned above; and by presenting before them, upon extraordinary occasions, such evidences of the real existence and infinitely superior character of their God, as should be amply sufficient to convince the judgment, and affect the heart of every thinking and well disposed subject.

The thoughtless multitude, however, as soon as they arrived among a people, whose religious principles and habits were so different from their own, became disposed to adopt and imitate; and female seductions greatly facilitated the degeneracy. As the natives ascribed all the blessings of life, fruitful seasons, success in war, and every

ingredient in national prosperity, to their having purchased the favour of their gods, by sacrifices and oblations, and ascribed also every calamity to their resentment; those Hebrews who had not the strongest impressions of true religion constantly upon their minds, would easily yield to the fallacy; they might perhaps think themselves more secure under the patronage of the tutelar god of the district, than under *his* government who brought them there.

This position is not hypothetical; it is founded upon facts, as the following instances will evince. The profligate Ahaz, when he was subdued by the Syrians, attributed the misfortune to his neglect in worshipping their gods; accordingly he sacrificed to the gods of Damascus, that they might assist him also against his enemies.* When Jerusalem was taken by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, in the days of Jeremiah the prophet, and numbers were carried into captivity, they who were left behind, being apprehensive of danger, expressed a desire to remove into Egypt, under Johanan their leader. Johanan consulted the prophet Jeremiah, promising that his orders should be obeyed. The answer of Jeremiah was

* 2 Chron. ch. xxviii. 83.

prohibitory. Had his counsel been agreeable to the inclinations of Johanan and his dependents, they would have obeyed cheerfully; but as it opposed them, sceptical doubts were entertained concerning the inspiration of the prophet. "Then spake Azariah the son of Hoshaiah, and Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the proud men, saying to Jeremiah, thou speakest falsely; the Lord our God hath not sent thee to say, go not into Egypt to sojourn there; but Baruch the son of Neriah, setteth thee on against us, for to deliver us into the hands of the Chaldeans." Upon their flight into Egypt, the prophet repeats, as a judgment upon them for disobedience, those calamities which he had announced as a warning. This produced the following remarkable apology, which confirms the principle we have advanced. "Then all the men which knew that their wives had burnt incense unto other gods, and all the women that stood by, a great multitude, even all the people that dwelt in the land of Egypt, in Pathaos, answered Jeremiah saying, *as for the word which thou hast spoken in the name of the Lord, we will not hearken to thee, but we will certainly do whatsoever thing goeth forth out of our own mouth, to burn incense to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto her, as we have done, we and*

*our fathers, our Kings, and our Princes, in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem; for then had we plenty of victuals, and were well, and saw no evil. But since we left off to burn incense to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto her, we have wanted all things, and have been consumed by the sword and the famine.**

To the above causes of seduction, we may safely add the corrupt affections of their own minds. These, instead of being restrained by paganism, as they were by the commands of God, were indulged to the utmost. An unbounded license was given to the gratification of every lust. The religious principles which favour our propensities, have a powerful advocate within; and by consecrating vice, they sooth and appease the conscience.

The following are mentioned in the Old Testament as the nominal gods of the Pagan nations, against whose worship the Hebrews were so frequently admonished, upon their entrance into the land of Canaan. Milcom, and Moloch, the gods of the Ammonites; Chemoth, Baal, Baalpeor, &c. Gods of the Moabites; Dagon, wor-

* See Jeremiah ch. xliii. xliv.

shipped by the Philistines ; Ashteroth, goddess of the Zidonians ; Baalzebub, worshipped at Ekron, near Samaria ; Baalim, and Baalperith, of the Midianites; Merodach, Bel, Nebo, gods of Babylon ; Misroth, a god of the Assyrians. The Sun, the Moon, and the hosts of heaven, were also objects of adoration ; it being supposed that they were inhabited by spirits of a superior order. None of the gods of Egypt are mentioned, until the flight of a remnant of the Jews after the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar; nor were those introduced into notoriety by the polite literature of the Greeks, and afterwards transplanted to Rome. Although the word *Satan* is so frequently used in the New Testament, it appears but comparatively seldom in the more ancient records ; where it always denotes a *seducer*, or *betrayer*, or *enemy*, but it never refers to an object of worship.* The *Serpent* is frequently mentioned in the Old Testament, as characteristic of seduction or deceit, but not as a god of the heathens.

It has been supposed by some, that these different idols were but varied representatives of the heavenly bodies, which were ultimately the objects of all worship ; under the belief that

* See Note H.

they were inhabited by spirits of a superior order. This may possibly have been the origin of their idol worship, but they did not adhere to this more refined species of idolatry. The ideas of the vulgar are always arrested by the present object; expecting from that alone some immediate emanations of power, without paying the least attention to emblematical representations. We may also observe that the names of several of these idols, most probably of all, are in the Syriac and Chaldaic languages, significant of those characters, and attributes, which correspond with the idea of local deities. We are told that Baal, Milcom, Moloch, Merodach, signify a king, sovereign, ruler; that the name of Ashteroth has a relation to flocks, herds, and riches; that Dagon, the god of the Philistines, signifies a dispenser of corn, and also of fish, and that Baalzebub of Ekron, was the god of flies.* As both Palestine and Samaria were situated near the sea coast, it is probable that these names may have been deemed appropriate to the peculiar supplies that were expected from these local deities; or protection from the peculiar evils to which they were exposed. Proper names in ancient times were not merely tokens of distinction; they had always an im-

* See Note I.

port respecting power, character, office, or memorial. It is highly probable that many of these idols were erected and worshipped by the ignorant and superstitious, according to the urgency of the occasion: and since to a people who are in a state of perpetual warfare, the idea of power, conquest, dominion, are the most prevalent and flattering, titles expressive of these would be the most frequent. The gods of the imagination having been created by every passion and affection of the human mind, by gratitude, by hopes, by fears, the term dæmon which has been given to them, was originally *generic*, without any immediate reference to character or disposition: Good was solicited, evil deprecated from one and the same object of adoration. But as gratitude is, perhaps, the least in exercise of all our respectable affections, and as the fear of an overwhelming evil, is much stronger than the most ardent desire of any positive good, thus dæmons began to degenerate, in the conceptions of those who believed in their existence, into beings of a resentful and vindictive character, requiring bribes to prevent their inflicting evil, instead of continuing benevolent agents, disposed to confer favours.

These local deities were surrounded by various

officers, who subsisted upon the bigotry and superstition of the ignorant multitude; whom, of consequence, it was their interest to deceive. The professed employment of the *Priests*, was the service of the altar. It was exclusively their office to offer up sacrifices and oblations to the gods. The province of a *Magician* chiefly consisted in working miracles, and interpreting dreams. *Sorcerers, Soothsayers*, those who practised divinations, &c. pretended to foresee future events; read the destinies of men; to explain ominous appearances in the skies, in the flight of birds, intestines of animals, &c. They undertook to procure, for particular votaries, the blessings of health, worldly prosperity, or whatever they might deem most valuable; and also to inflict diseases and other calamities, on the disobedient and refractory.

That the populace were firm believers in the superior knowledge and power of these professed Intermediates, there can be no doubt; and that many of the Priests, Magicians, and Sorcerers, believed also in the truth of the religion they professed, is highly probable. But this belief would be no impediment, in corrupt minds, to their using deceit for the good of mankind, or to promote their own interest. It was an avowed maxim among the sages of anti-

quity, that the vulgar are best governed by deceit. As it was an early doctrine in the Christian church, that sacred truths may be supported occasionally by falsehood, and that pious frauds, committed with the best intentions, had more of merit than of demerit in their contexture, it cannot be expected, that those engaged in the service of dæmons would be more scrupulous. If christianity itself was thus perverted by its professed advocates, through their ignorance of its nature and design, what could be expected from the advocates of a religion, of which morality was not a constituent part?

In the Jewish dispensation, no deceit of any kind was permitted. The God of truth required the promulgation of truth, and authorized his messengers to expose every deception. He aimed at their conviction that, while they were demolishing idolatry, they were vindicating the cause of human reason, by maintaining the exclusive empire of Jehovah.

From the numberless unequivocal evidences of this fact, we shall select a few. When the Israelites were ordered to destroy every appearance of paganism, they were assured that those whom the heathens worshipped were *false gods*, were *no gods*. After the establishment of this people in the land of promise, as they were deeply corrupt-

ed by the idolatrous practices of the surrounding nations, their prophets expostulate with them, respecting not only the wickedness but the *absurdity* of their conduct, and positively assert that the gods of the heathens are a *vanity and a lie.* "Behold, says the prophet Isaiah, they all are *vanity;* their works are *nothing;* their molten images are *wind* and *confusion.*"* "The idols have spoken vanity, and the diviners have seen a *lie,* and have told *false* dreams."† "The prophets prophecy *lies* in my name; I sent them not, neither have I commanded them, nor spoken to them; they prophecy unto you a *false* vision and divination, and a thing of *nought,* and the *deceit of their heart.*"‡ "Behold I am against them that prophecy *false* dreams, saith the Lord, and do tell them, and cause my people to err by their *lies,* and their lightness."‖ "Will ye pollute me among my people for handfuls of barley and pieces of bread, to slay the souls that should not die, and to save the souls alive that should not live, by your *lying* to my people that hear your *lies?*"§ Again, "Thus saith the Lord God, woe unto the foolish prophets that *follow their own spirits and have seen nothing.*"¶

* Isa. ch xli. v. 29.
† Zech. ch. x. 2.
‡ Jerem. ch. xiv. v. 19.
‖ Jer. ch. xxiii. v. 32.
§ Ezek. ch. xiii. 19.
¶ Ezek. ch. xiii. 3.

It has been asserted by some theologians, that these imputations of deceit and imposture, do not primarily respect the priests, prophets, diviners, dreamers of dreams, &c. but those invisible agents or dæmons who were worshipped, through the medium of images, incantations, &c. and who inspired the diviners, soothsayers, &c. with a spirit of falsehood and lies; so that being deceived themselves, they might not always be conscious of deceiving others. We shall not in this place oppose the supposition, by deducing arguments from reason, but by the explicit, unequivocal assertions of those whom all Christians acknowledge to have been divinely inspired. The declarations of Moses, and of all the true prophets, against the *very existence* of these beings, are numerous, pointed, and decisive. Every argument employed to dissuade the Israelites from imitating the idolatry of the Gentiles, is founded upon the NONENTITY of these supposed agents. It is natural to conclude that when superstitious people formed an idol, *they* expected some dæmon would make it his abode, or at least the seat of his operations; and that he would become their patron on account of the honour conferred upon him; in the same manner as our Christian churches were formerly dedicated to some Saint, in order to procure his peculiar

patronage. But it was the express object of inspiration to guard the people of Israel against so gross a delusion; and to assure them that these images *continued* merely images; retaining all the imbecility of the materials of which they were made, Priests, magicians, diviners, soothsayers, *alone*, are accused of the imposition.

The passages quoted above are taken from the prophets of the Lord, commissioned to reproach, and severely to censure the numerous Israelites, who had learned all the arts of divination from the Pagans, at the periods when the Jewish religion was exceedingly corrupted; and who impiously attempted to worship Jehovah, by adopting the rites of the heathens. It was also become a familiar practice among them, to act the part of sorcerers for a maintenance; for handfuls of barley, and pieces of bread, like the wandering fortune-tellers of the present day. These vagabonds were frequently accused of deceiving the people, embarrassing their minds, and destroying their confidence in the true prophets of the Lord. But *they alone* were accused. Not the most distant reference is made to any dæmon, as sharing in the imposture. Hence we may safely conclude, that no dæmon existed to become a participant. The inspired prophets of God could not have concealed so im-

portant a fact, through ignorance, neglect, or misrepresentation.

Again,—The destruction of images, altars, and groves, was always considered, by legislator and prophet, as the abolition of the false religion of the pagan nations; which could not have been the case, had invisible agents actually existed, whose supernatural powers would still continue, although the ostensible means should be destroyed; and who, according to the opinion always entertained of them, must have been strongly disposed to avenge the affront, instead of being thus debilitated in their operations. The whole force of the argument consisted, not in acknowledging them to possess a power inferior to that of Jehovah; not in their being the tutelar deities of other nations, and not of the Israelites, but that they were *no gods;* they were *nonentities;* that idols, so far from being able to protect their votaries, could not protect themselves from the attacks of a destroyer.

The conception entertained of a God, among the ancient nations, was uniformly that of a superior being, who had a power to influence human affairs, direct the fate of mortals, foresee future events, and communicate their knowledge to others. These are also the characteristics of

a God, given in the sacred scriptures themselves. "Ye shall be as Gods knowing good and evil." "I will make thee a God unto Pharaoh." The prophet Isaiah maintains this to be the definition of a God, while he demonstrates that it does not belong to the gods of the heathens. "Let them shew the former things what they be, that we may consider them, and know the latter end of them, or declare us the things for to come. Shew the things that are to come hereafter, *that we may know that ye are Gods.*"*

In the challenge given by Elijah to the numerous priests of Baal, his satire would have been irrelevant, and the irony have lost its point, had he not considered them as serving a *Nonentity.* These priests were, in the present instance, much in earnest; for their lives depended upon success. "They called on the name of Baal, from morning even until noon, saying, O Baal hear us; but there was no voice, nor any that answered. And it came to pass at noon, that Elijah mocked them, and said, cry aloud, *for he is a god*, either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey; peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked. And they cried aloud, and cut themselves after their

* Isa. ch. xli. v. 22, 23.

manner with knives, until the blood gushed out upon them."* This passage not only corresponds with the above definition of a God, but it proves that Elijah smiled at the absurd notion of his existence. When to avoid a suspicion of his practising any of the deceits which these impostors used, Elijah had ordered trenches to be made round his altar, and water to be plentifully poured into them, to evince that the consuming fire must descend from above; and when the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the burnt sacrifice, the people witnessing the truth of his miracle, and the failure of his antagonists, "fell on their faces, and they said, *the Lord he is God; the Lord he is God.*" At that moment they also denied the existence of Baal.

"Babylon is fallen, is fallen," exclaims the prophet Isaiah,† "and all the graven images of her gods he has broken to the ground!" In the following animated and sarcastic passage, the prophet fully declares his opinion of these gods. Bell, boweth down; Nebo stoopeth; their idols were upon the beasts, and upon the cattle. Your carriages were heavy laden; they are a burden to the weary beast. They stoop, they bow down together; *they could not deliver the burden, but*

* 1 Kings ch. xviii. † 1 Kings ch. xxi. 9.

*themselves are gone into captivity."** Can impotence be more strongly characterized?

"Hath a nation *changed* their gods, which are yet *no gods?* But my people have changed their glory for that which doth not profit."† As the thief is ashamed when he is found, so is the house of Israel ashamed; they, their kings, their princes and their priests, and their prophets, saying to a STOCK thou art my father, and to a STONE thou hast brought me forth. But where are the gods *that thou hast made thee?* Let them arise, if they can save thee in the day of trouble."‡ Had any intelligent agent existed, rendering these images the medium of deceit, such expressions could not have been uttered.

The prophet Isaiah enquires, in the name of Jehovah, "To whom will ye liken me, and make me equal, and compare me that we may be like? They lavish gold out of the bag, and weigh silver in the balance, and hire a goldsmith, and *he maketh it a* GOD. They bear him upon the shoulder; they carry him, and set him in his place, and he standeth; from his place shall he not remove, yea one shall cry unto him, *yet he cannot answer nor save him out of his trouble.*" To suppose that this great prophet confines the sig-

* 1 Kings ch. xlvi. v. 1, 2. † Jer. ch. ii. v. 11.
‡ Jer. ch. ii. v. 26, 28.

nification of such expressions to the mere image, while it was secretly known by him that the dæmon it was intended to represent actually existed, is to suppose that he resembled that dæmon in his fallacies.

In perfect consonance with the position that the gods of the heathens had no existence, but in the imaginations of their worshippers, does the God of the Israelites claim the title of the LIVING *God.* Hence it is that the prophets who speak in his name, so frequently introduce his decrees or admonitions with the solemn asseveration, "*As I live,* says the Lord." Nor can we justly interpret in any other manner the repeated declarations that he is the *only* God. The prophets of the Lord are not contending with the Israelites about *names* but *realities.* The subject in debate, is not by what *titles* those beings superior to man shall be called who oppose the will of Jehovah, but whether there be any such beings in *existence?* and the determination is in the negative. For " thus saith the Lord, the king of Israel, and his redeemer the Lord of hosts, I am the first, I am the last, and *beside me there is no God.* Is there a God beside me? *Yea there is no God; I know not any.* " They that make a graven image are all of them va-

nity."* "Woe unto him that sayeth to the WOOD awake; to the DUMB STONE, arise, it shall teach! Behold it is laid over with gold and silver, and there is no breath at all in the midst of it. But Jehovah is in his holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before him."† "Ask ye of Jehovah rain in the time of the latter rain; so Jehovah shall make bright clouds, and give them showers of rain, to every one grass in the field; for the idols have spoken vanity, and the diviners have seen a lie, and told false dreams; they comfort in vain."‡

To him is ascribed the exclusive right to send famine, pestilence, and the sword upon the earth, according to the good pleasure of his will. It is not admitted that the gods of the heathens, could inflict the evils at which their votaries were so frequently terrified. "I form the light and create darkness; I make peace and create evil; I the Lord do all these things."§

In a word, the Creator of the Universe claims the sole empire of the universe, without rival or competitor; and he declares that he is jealous of his honour. "I am Jehovah, that is my name, and my glory I will not give to another, nor my praise to graven images.‖

We shall conclude this article with the follow-

* Isa. ch. xl. † Habak. ch. ii. v. 19, 20. ‡ Zach. ch. x. v. 1, 2.
§ Isa. xlvii. v. 7. ‖ Isa. ch. xlii. v. 8.

ing passage, as it contains a summary and a confirmation of all the principles we have advanced. "Thus saith the Lord, learn not the way of the heathen, and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven, for the heathen are dismayed at them. For the custom of the people is vain. For one cutteth a tree out of the forest, the work of the hands of the workman with the axe. They fasten it with nails and with hammers, that it move not. They are upright as the palm tree, but they speak not. They must needs be borne because they cannot go. Be not afraid of them for they cannot do evil, neither is it in them to do good. They are all the work of cunning men; but Jehovah is the true God, he is the *living* God, and an everlasting King. At his wrath the earth shall tremble, and the nations shall not be able to abide his indignation. Then shall ye say unto them, the gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, even they shall perish from the earth, and from under the heavens. He hath made the earth by his power, he hath established the world by his wisdom, and hath stretched out the heavens by his discretion. When he uttereth his voice, there is a multitude of waters in the heavens, and he causeth the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth; he maketh lightnings with

rain, and bringeth forth the wind out of his treasures. Every man is brutish in his knowledge; every founder is confounded by the graven image; for his molten image is falsehood, and there is no breath in them."*

The prophets could not have expressed themselves in so explicit a manner, had it been their only object to warn the Israelites against the worship of dæmons who actually existed. The strain of dissuasion would have been confined to the folly of worshipping spirits, whose characters were impure and revengeful, in preference to the God of perfect purity; or of fearing an inferior power to the neglect of the great Lord of universal nature, who made them a tender of his almighty protection; whereas it wholly consists in expatiating upon the incapacity of graven images to administer aid, because they had no more power than the materials of which they were formed.

Historical facts perfectly correspond with the above explicit and unequivocal declaration. There is not, in a single instance, any acknowledgment that dæmons or invisible spirits worked miracles, interpreted dreams, or foretold future events. Every thing of this kind is ascribed to

* Jerem. ch. x.

pretended agents, to magicians, soothsayers, and diviners themselves. That persons of this description practised the arts of deceit is indubitable. It is also indubitable, that they perpetually succeeded in deluding the people, which has never been difficult in times of extreme ignorance. If in christian countries, and even in the centre of an enlightened community, there be scarcely a village without its interpreter of dreams, and peasants who believe in them: if the Initiated render themselves expert in performing wonders, to the utter amazement of the uninformed; if men, well versed in the physical sciences, and of keen penetration, cannot, even in modern days, always discover the manner in which various deceptions are conducted, by those who do not claim a communication with invisible agents; how easy was it for those who were venerated as the favourite ministers of these agents, to impose upon minds prepared to believe in the miraculous, in times when palpable ignorance was so prevalent! Although the magicians in Pharaoh's court, upon slighter occasions, might have given such interpretations to dreams as established their credit; and consequently gave additional weight to every sentence they uttered, yet they confessed that to interpret the dreams of the butler and

baker, during their confinement with Joseph in the prison, was beyond their art; as also the two dreams of Pharaoh. These dreams proceeded from a higher source than the ordinary fancies of the brain; their ends and objects were of great importance; they were worthy of being inspired, and worthy of the real inspiration of the interpreter. We are told that the magicians imitated a few of the earlier miracles of Moses, but the power was confined to the *magicians* themselves, to which the skill of many a modern conjurer is fully adequate. It is not hinted that they were inspired by any *dæmon.* This is merely an inference suggested by a preconceived hypothesis, which cannot be admitted until that hypothesis be fully proved. There were no marks of peculiar expertness in the trick played by the woman of Endor, upon the perturbed mind of Saul. She told him whatever she pleased, and he was determined to believe every thing she told him. She pretended to see every thing, but *he* saw nothing. Had dæmons the power to inspire, this woman needed not to have consulted them, the work was so easy.* When Nebuchadnezzar had forgotten his dream, he called the "magicians and the astrologers, and

* See 1 Sam. ch. xxviii. v. 12, 14.

the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans for to shew the king his dreams." This requisition was far beyond all their united powers. The king would immediately have discovered the fallacy of whatever they might have invented, to their confusion and destruction: and as they had no real dæmon to suggest the truth, they were obliged to acknowledge their incapacity. Could the king have recollected his dream, they would certainly have attempted to impose upon his credulity, by some artful and evasive interpretation given to it. The king naturally concluding that it was equally in the power of an inspiring dæmon to inform them of the dream itself, as of the interpretation, began to suspect them of imposture. "Ye have prepared lying and corrupt words before me, therefore tell me the dream, and I shall know that ye can shew me the interpretation thereof." The demand being unusual, and far beyond the extent of their art, they pronounced it to be unreasonable, confessing "that there is not a man upon the earth that can shew the king's matter, therefore there is no king, lord, nor ruler, that asketh such things at any magician, or astrologer, or Chaldean." They were equally unable to interpret the hand writing on the wall at the command of Belshazzar, and for the same obvious reason.

Their gods never inspired them concerning things which it was not in their own power to discover or invent.*

But although these gods were the mere creatures of the imagination, they had all the power of realities. The ignorant and superstitious who believed in them, were as influentially possessed by the dæmons of their own creation, as if real existences had descended from the regions of the air, and taken up their abode among them. The same terrors were excited from the apprehensions of having offended them; the same horrid rites were performed to pacify their anger and obtain their favour; and the same immoralities were committed, as if patrons of every vice had issued their absolute commands. Consequently the destruction of these idols of the imagination, became as necessary as the destruction of existing dæmons would have been; and to chase them away from the human fancy, was, in its effects, equivalent to chasing them from the universe.

It is not difficult to discover what it was that

* See Note K.

constituted this necessity; or to trace the absolute impossibility of advancing in the paths of Well-being and Happiness, until such notions are completely eradicated, and the most opposite sentiments have taken full possession of the human mind.

As *Fear* is the strongest of all the passions, and the predominant passion of the ignorant, and as uncontrolled power is the first quality that strikes such minds, thus generally speaking, the first, and certainly the most numerous gods created by the fancy, will be *objects of terror.* The deification of wise and benevolent characters is a subsequent act; and, notwithstanding its absurdity, it is still the act of an observant and grateful mind. Where Terror is predominant, the next operative principle will be an ardent desire to conciliate the favour of such beings; and although no one can love their characters, real hatred will be concealed under professions of respect and confidence; and a determination will be formed to purchase protection from greater evils, by the most costly sacrifices, or by submission to the severest penalties. We must also remark that, as the fancies of men are very prolific, they will generate more of these formidable beings in a few years, than the slow progress of reason will be able to subdue, in the

course of ages. Consequently, there will be as many torments to plague and terrify mankind, as there are unpleasant circumstances in life to suggest the opinion of their existence. Thus, as long as terrific spectres of the brain are continually present to a credulous mind, and their decrees are inferred from every thing which can be construed into an evil omen, misery must be the inevitable consequence, from the habitual prevalence of terror.

Another very important consideration is, that wherever there is a belief in these agents, the order of nature, or in other words, the plans of providence, are disturbed by the imagination, as effectually as if rival powers were capable of interfering; and the belief itself equally becomes an impediment to the progress of useful knowledge. Although we are born in ignorance, it is not the design of our Creator that we shall remain in that state. The Deity has given us mental powers, by which we are enabled to emancipate ourselves; and these mental powers operate by gradually and progressively introducing us to an acquaintance with the real existence, nature, qualities, relations, and uses of objects, their operations upon each other, and the results. The more our knowledge increases, the more frequent will be our perceptions, and the

deeper our convictions of physical influence: we shall obtain a more intimate acquaintance with cause and effect, and a greater confidence in their operations. By these alone we can be confident of right principles and right actions, in every circumstance, and respecting all that is interesting to us. In proportion as we clearly perceive that the effects of a preceding cause become, in their turns, causes to succeeding effects, in a perpetual concatenation; in proportion as we learn the nature and characters of each by their tendencies, we shall be enabled to make secure and speedy advances in the path of well-being. We shall finally pervade the universe, until we prostrate ourselves at the footstool of Jehovah, the great and universal Cause! But these wretched agents, bred in a disorderly imagination, throw obstacles in our way at every step. We are no longer able to discern what is natural, from what is preternatural. Every criterion by which to judge is destroyed. Physical causes and effects are annihilated: for some sly, impertinent, and malignant dæmon, that hates light and knowledge, as moles hate the sun, may invert the regular order of things in a moment; may exert an influence of its own, independent of all our established laws, and leave us, after our best endeavours, a prey to

chagrin and disappointment, and the sport of his malignancy! A wild imagination thus usurps an unbounded, and a tyrannic empire, over all the rational faculties of the soul; by which it ought to have been held in strict subordination: Its mandates stifle every salutary doubt, prohibit every rational inquiry, obscure every truth, and compel us to follow phantoms, as if they were realities; ignorance is rendered permanent; and while this remains permanent, there can be no progressive happiness.

But a belief in such beings not only impedes the progress of knowledge, it rapidly promotes that of vice and immorality. In place of having a beneficial influence upon morals, it provides a substitute. To obtain their favour, by worshipping them in a manner supposed to be most acceptable, is deemed sufficient for all the purposes of safety, or of worldly advantage; and beyond these the ideas of happiness do not extend; for the desire of moral and intellectual pleasures has no place in the breast. The greatest sensualities are permitted, nay encouraged by their deities, and they will certainly be indulged by the votary. Their supposed influence over the mind, may furnish a plea for the commission of the most enormous vices. Those who think themselves to be inspired by their gods, will feel an obligation to

obey, whatever be the nature of the command. It is not to be expected that human resolutions should be able to resist the impulse of a superior power, although the action may, in the opinion of mankind, be immoral, base, and cruel. Profane writers give us a melancholy catalogue of the crimes committed by heathen nations, under the sanction of religion. These are not specifically enumerated, according to the extent of the catalogue, in the sacred writing; yet reference is frequently made to them. Idolatry and wickedness, are always considered as being synonymous; and every profligacy is ascribed to the worship of these imaginary beings. The prophet Isaiah accuses the apostate Israelites, with inflaming themselves with idols under every green tree; slaying the children in the valleys, under the clifts of the rocks."* "The shew of their countenance doth witness against them, and they declare their sin as Sodom; they hide it not."† Jeremiah, exclaiming against the sin of Idolatry, says, "in thy skirts is found the blood of the souls of the poor innocents."‡ Lift up thine eyes unto the high places, and see where thou hast not been lain with. In the ways hast thou sat for them, as the Arabian in

* Isa. ch. lvii. v. 3. passim. † Is. ch. iii. v. 9.
‡ Jer. ch. ii. 34.

the wilderness, and thou hast polluted the land with thy whoredoms, and thy wickedness."* "Behold ye trust in lying words that cannot profit. Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye know not, and come and stand before me in this house which is called by my name, and say we are delivered to do all these abominations? Is this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers? &c.†

But the vice against which they are the most frequently admonished, and for the commission of which they are the most severely reproved, and a vice that is solely to be ascribed to idolatrous worship, is that of offering up human sacrifices. This crime, as well as those unnatural lusts to which idolaters were addicted, not only violated all the principles of human nature, but it was as cruel as it was unnatural.

We have upon former occasions, amply considered the influence of true religion, both upon personal happiness, and the steady uniform practice of personal and social duties. We have endeavoured to prove that rational piety, and

* Jer. ch. iii. v. 2. † Jer. ch. vii. v. 9. See also ch. ix. v. 3. 45; ch. xxiii. 14, 15; ch. xxix. v. 23.

rational piety alone, is the only source of present consolation, the firmest foundation of future hopes; and that it affords the strongest and most animating motives to practise every virtue, in every state and relation of life. The statements formerly made, and to which we refer our readers,* clearly evince, that *to forsake the worship of the living and true God, is to forsake personal and social happiness.* There can be no motive for a steady trust in beings as capricious as the worst of men; or to have a full confidence in those whose wisdom is doubtful; or to love those in whom malignity and revenge are the prominent characters. Nor can the uniformity of virtuous practice exist, where the beings worshipped are not only indifferent concerning a virtuous character, but enjoin rituals destructive of every virtuous principle and affection.

Thus, if it be a truth that the supreme Being loves mankind, that he wills their happiness, and has communicated to them the power of becoming happy, by cultivating right principles and cherishing right affections, he must determine to sweep away all those obstacles, which, as long

* See vol. ii. p. 349, On Religion as a source of well-being; and vol. iii. p. 204, On the Religious Principles most conducive to the uniform practice of virtue.

as they exist, act as insuperable impediments to the accomplishment of his benignant purposes. If knowledge be preferable to ignorance; if walking according to the laws of nature be superior to erring in the dark; if virtue be preferable to vice; if love towards the most perfect of beings, and a confidence in the wisdom and benignity of his government, be more conducive to felicity, than the predominance of servile apprehensions from unworthy and malignant characters, he who loves the happiness of man, testifies his benignity by opposing these impertinent and pernicious idols of deluded minds, in a manner most correspondent with the constitution of human nature.

It is however obvious, that this important end could only be obtained by the destruction of those, whose depraved habits were beyond the power of reformation; and by employing every proper means to prevent the chosen Nation from being totally corrupted, by the depraved example of those that survived. In addition to the precautionary measures stated above, they were commanded, not merely to abstain from imitation, but to destroy idolatry in all its forms, and with all its appurtenances; to drive the inhabitants out of the land; or put them to the sword; to break in pieces their images, over-

turn their altars, cut down their groves, that not a vestige might remain. This command was absolute and peremptory; their prosperity or adversity as a people was always represented as being dependent upon the observance, or non-observance of it. "When the Lord thy God shall bring thee into the land whither thou goest to possess it, and hath cast out many nations before thee, and when the Lord shall deliver them before thee, thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them, neither shalt thou make marriages with them; for they will turn aside thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods."* "Ye shall destroy all the places wherein the nations which ye shall possess serve their gods, upon the high mountains, and upon the hills, and under every green tree; and ye shall overthrow their altars, and break their pillars, and burn their groves with fire; and ye shall hew down the graven images of their gods, and destroy the names of them out of their place."† It was also enjoined upon the Israelites to punish with death, without favour or partiality, any of their own people, who being seduced themselves, attempted to seduce others. "If there arise among you a prophet, or dreamer of dreams, that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams, shall be put

* Deut. ch. xi. † Deut. ch. vii.

to death, because he has spoken to turn you from the Lord your God." &c. If thy brother, the son of thy mother, or thy daughter, or the wife of thy bosom, or thy friend, which is as thine own soul, entice thee secretly, saying let us go and serve other gods, thou shalt not consent unto him, nor hearken to him; neither shall thine eye pity him, neither shalt thou spare, neither shalt thou conceal him, but thou shalt surely kill him." These commands were frequently repeated. Partial indulgences and forbearances were resented as offences of the greatest magnitude; as acts of treason and rebellion: and the subsequent events of the Jewish history evince that they did not rebel with impunity.

The author of life, bestows existence in whatever state he pleases, and hath a right to call out of existence whom he wills, and when he wills; but he permitted these idolatrous nations to exist until they became ripe for destruction, by being incorrigible in themselves, and dangerous neighbours to the Israelites. He therefore enjoined their extirpation, predicting the fatal consequences that would ensue from a neglect or a partial execution of the command. Their

* Deut. ch. xiii.

total extirpation, would have been no other than the summary execution of a sentence upon delinquents, who were guilty of crimes, which every well-ordered state would have punished in a similar manner. When depraved lusts and cruel murders are enjoined as offices of religion, they are not only rendered permanently pernicious, by the supposed obligations of religion, but those who commit them have forfeited their title to life, according to the law of nature, and in the opinion of those who have not been infatuated by their delusive principles. The tribes of priests, magicians, soothsayers &c. &c. being prime agents and encouragers of these wicked practices, deserved the severest punishment. They were also egregious impostors. As their religions did not enjoin morality, they practised deceit without remorse. For although they might believe in the existence of the gods whom they served, they did not scruple to announce the wicked purposes and suggestions of their own minds, as the commands of these idols, or to interpret ominous appearances as their own interests might dictate. Profane writers assure us that the priests frequently exercised their power of deception. It was not unusual for sovereigns to obtain favourable predictions by bribes, when in a state of warfare, that the courage

of their own subjects might be excited, and that of their enemies depressed. These false prophets also granted every species of indulgence, and exercised their power of seduction, for gain. Hence it is that they are so frequently and severely stigmatized as deceivers and liars, in the sacred records. Thus was Balaam hired by Balak, king of Moab, to curse the Israelites, at whose power and prowess he was greatly alarmed. Nehemiah informs us that a prophet was hired by Sanballat to terrify him. "I perceived that God had not sent him, but that he pronounced this prophecy against me, for Tobias and Sanballat had hired him; therefore was he hired that I should be afraid and do so and sin, and that they might have matter for an evil report, that they might reproach me." It is not possible for depravity to extend further; nor can the punishment of such crimes be too severe. It is true, most of the above instances are taken from the conduct of the Israelites themselves in their degenerate state; but their degeneracy is always ascribed to their imitation of the idolatrous nations with which they were surrounded. Such characters deserved therefore the severest punishments in their double capacity of Idolaters, and Impostors.

During the period that the Israelites were in a rude and less disciplined state, or before they were duly organized as a nation, extraordinary modes of coercion became absolutely necessary upon urgent occasions; and the earlier approaches of these people to an imitation of idolatrous rites were punished with peculiar severity. Hence the the miraculous destruction of the three thousand men who compelled Aaron to make a golden calf; the destruction of Horam, Dathan, and Abiram; and similar acts of severity. It is obvious that savage minds, and those who are destitute of mental cultivation, are to be held in subjugation by *terror alone:* and if their rebellious spirits had not been subdued, the plans of Providence must have failed. But as a proof that the God of mercy does not afflict willingly, as soon as the Jewish constitution had acquired such a degree of stability, that it could be supported by natural means, these supernatural punishments were very seldom inflicted; and the offenders were, in general, left to the physical or moral consequences of their own conduct. This will explain the reason why the severe mandates to extirpate the first race of idolaters, upon their taking possession of the promised land, were not repeated after the Israelites had obtained a permanent settlement; why the same awful judgments

did not fall, in a supernatural manner, upon the idolatrous Solomon, which were inflicted upon his less culpable, because more ignorant, ancestors:—why persuasions, promises, remonstrances, and threats, were employed, instead of an immediate display of vengeance, in consequence of the idolatrous practices of the house of Israel;—why their final punishment consisted in the national distress, and subsequent captivity, to which their abandoned principles had exposed them, according to the more usual train of human events. We perceive also, that the immediate interpositions of heaven, of any kind, were less frequent in the more advanced state of the nation, than at its first establishment. Like other human beings, they were left to the exercise of their own volitions, and permitted to act according to the suggestions of their own minds, as far as the security of the grand object would permit.

A concise epitome of the moral and religious history of this people, from their first introduction and establishment in the land of Canaan, by Joshua, to their total disorganization under the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar; and their subsequent restoration after the days of their captivity were expired, will illustrate and confirm the above position; and therefore it deserves our peculiar attention.

SECT. V.

ON THE RELIGIOUS AND MORAL CHARACTER OF THE ISRAELITES, UNDER THE DIFFERENT FORMS OF GOVERNMENT, WITH THE CORRESPONDENT CONSEQUENCES.

This chosen People, considered as a body, do not appear to have possessed powers of intellect, or degrees of mental improvement, superior to the contemporary nations; and they required a very wise government to enable them to act with tolerable decency and discretion. Their exalted opinion of Moses, founded upon their knowledge of the wonders he had wrought for them, and the wisdom that was so conspicuous in every part of his administration, held them, upon the whole, in due subordination, during their emigration from Egypt, and their abode in the wilderness. His successor Joshua, was a man of sound judgment and undissembled piety. He had himself the strongest assurances of the divine assistance suitable to his exigences; and he was able to inspire the Israelites with a confidence in his government. In the course of his life, the children of Israel subdued many of their enemies, and took possession of their lands; but not to the extent which had

been commanded. It is said that, towards the close of his days, "the Lord gave rest unto Israel from all their enemies round about them." When he felt his end approaching, he enumerated the particulars of God's miraculous conduct towards the people; exhorted them in the most affectionate manner to pay a strict obedience to the divine laws; promised all the blessings which Moses had formerly pronounced; and warned them of the dreadful consequences which would issue from rebellion. Perceiving that the propensity to worship the gods of the nations which they had subdued, began already to operate, he earnestly expostulates with them, on the folly of their conduct; and he strongly recommends resolution and consistency in the service of the true God. "Now therefore fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and truth, and put away the gods which your fathers served, on the other side of the flood and in Egypt; and serve ye the Lord; and if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served, on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land ye dwell; but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." The people, under a momentary impulse of pious gratitude, "answered and said, "God forbid

that we should forsake the Lord, to serve other gods; for Jehovah our God, he it is that brought us up and our fathers out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage, and which did those great signs in our sight, and preserved us in all the way wherein we went, and among all the people among whom we passed."* Joshua repeated his apprehensions of their future apostasy, and they reiterated their promises of fidelity.

At this happy period they seemed to have acquired a consistency of character, and to have been deeply impressed with the importance of true religion. They were obedient and prosperous during the administration of Joshua, and his immediate successors. "The people served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the Elders that outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the Lord that he did for Israel." But "when all the generation were gathered unto their fathers, and there arose another generation after them, which knew not the Lord, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel, the Children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and served Baalim; and they forsook the Lord God of their

* Joshua ch. xxiv. v. 14.

fathers who brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods; of the gods of the people that were round about them, and bowed themselves unto them, and provoked the Lord to anger."*

Under the subsequent direction of their Judges they became extremely profligate. After some few efforts on the part of their leaders, some severe chastisements, transient penitence, and partial reformations, they sunk into the depth of human depravity. Forsaking the God of their fathers, and forsaken by him, they became, to a very great extent, pagans in their religious principles, and consequently in their morals. Their form of government from being a complete theocracy, sunk into a disorderly republic. As a republic cannot subsist in a flourishing state, without the most determined virtue, without a strong perception of *duties* as well as of *rights*, nothing but disorder and confusion could be expected from a populace, too ignorant to discern what is right, and abounding with strong passions and propensities impelling them to follow every thing that was wrong. In vindication of this statement, we shall simply refer our readers to the narrative respecting the Levite,

* Judg. ch. ii. v. 7. passim.

whose concubine was given up to be abused by the Benjamites in Gibeoth, in order to prevent a more flagitious crime; the destructive wars which ensued, and the illicit measures adopted by the Benjamites to replenish population. These were transactions which incontestably indicate both the depth and extent of depravity, by the perpetration of crimes which could only have been expected from the citizens of Sodom and Gomorrah. But "in those days every man did that which was right in his own eyes."*

Although the extent of their degeneracy, was not so great as to subvert the counsels of Jehovah, yet he withdrew from them the patronage they would have continued to enjoy, had they proved themselves deserving of it. We are told, in the book of Samuel, that "the word of the Lord was precious in those days;" yet in the history of this eminent man of God, we perceive that another, and final effort was made to reclaim them, before the dissolution of the theocratic form of government. The prophet Eli, who had directed the people for the space of forty years, was destitute of that energy of character which his important office demanded. His paternal indulgences confirmed the profli-

* See Judges, ch. xxx. v. 20.

gacy of his sons. They prostituted the sacred office of a priest to the most iniquitous and lascivious purposes, without due reprehension ; and they rendered themselves unworthy and unfit to become his successors. The pious Samuel was appointed to the priesthood in their stead; and he became, for a short period, an instrument of great efficacy. He was able to check, to a considerable degree, the iniquities he could not entirely eradicate.

The sons of Samuel did not imitate their father's excellencies. They were vicious and depraved, and thus had they rendered themselves disqualified for the high office of being Judges in Israel; "for they turned aside after lucre, and took bribes and perverted judgment." As Samuel was advanced in years, the people manifested a strong desire to change their form of government. They were induced by the gloomy prospect of their being improperly governed by unworthy successors, and also by an increasing propensity to imitate the example of the nations surrounding them. "The elders of Israel gathered themselves together, and came to Samuel unto Ramah, and said unto him, behold thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways, now make us a king to judge us like all the nations." "The thing displeased Samuel." He might pos-

sibly feel a degree of resentment at this rejection of his sons; but we may suppose that he was principally influenced by the apprehensions, that, in making the proposition, they openly renounced the government which had conducted them through so many difficulties, and thus exposed themselves to the wrath of God. He was divinely instructed to comply with their request. "And the Lord God said unto Samuel, hearken unto the voice of this people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected *thee*, but they have rejected *me*, that *I* should not reign over them." Samuel was authorized to state to them, in the fullest and most explicit manner, the consequences which would follow; and to inform them that an earthly monarch, whom they preferred to the universal Sovereign, would be severe in his requisitions, and selfish in all his motives: that he would consider their persons, their sons, their daughters, their wealth in great measure at his own command; and employ them for the purposes of his own ambition, aggrandizement, and pleasures. "Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, nay but we will have a king over us, that we may also be like all the nations, and that our king

may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles."*

The lot fell upon one who promised to be most acceptable to a people, whose conceptions of the qualifications requisite to form a good king and a happy community, must have been imperfect and confused. His external appearance at once rendered him popular; for " when he stood among the people, he was higher than any of the people from the shoulders and upwards; and Samuel said to all the people, see ye him whom the Lord hath chosen, that there is none like him among all the people? And all the people shouted and said, God save the king."† This man conducted himself with propriety, while he was under the wise direction of Samuel, but after his decease, the imbecilities of his character manifested themselves in numberless instances. He was precipitate, superstitious, irascible, and jealous. He profaned the sacred office of the priesthood by officiating himself, from a spirit of impatience. His indiscretions exposed him to dangers, from which he could

* 1 Sam. ch. viii. v. 3. passim. † 1 Sam. ch. x. v. 23.

devise no other means of extricating himself, than by an act of suicide. Upon his death the government was transferred to another family.

David his successor, possessed every qualification to render a nation secure, respectable, and happy. His talents and address discovered themselves in his early youth; his courage was undaunted; his plans and regulations were wise; and he had a well-directed zeal in the service of his God. His piety was ardent, pure, and sublime. His devotional spirit relieved the cold formalities of external services, by inspiring the soul with the most exalted sentiments, the most reverential fear, the sincerest love and gratitude, towards the one God, the sovereign of universal nature. Although he sinned in some instances, far beyond what could have been expected from such a character, yet his contrition was deep and sincere; and it reflected an honour upon the purity of that religion, which *alone* demands contrition, for crimes which are perpetrated in other religions as *acceptable services.* Had his successors uniformly imitated his exemplary conduct, the complacent superintendence of providence would not have been withdrawn; miraculous interferences would have been unnecessary; and sovereigns would have shewn themselves the *genuine*

vicegerents of heaven, by a conscientious obedience to the commands of heaven. This appears to have been the happiest period in the whole Jewish history. Their dominions were extensive; they were in profound peace; they were the admiration and envy of surrounding nations for their richness and greatness. We may infer that they were, during this reign, the most eminent for their piety and virtue, and that the deity was making good his promise to them, that their temporal prosperity should correspond with their obedience. But this prosperity soon became a snare unto them, and the succeeding reign was the commencement of a degeneracy which was never subdued.

The reign of Solomon was popular and splendid. But religion began to degenerate from its influential simplicity and pristine grandeur, into external pomp and costly ostentation. The inefficiency of these additions to cherish the devotion of the heart, was manifested by the conduct of his more advanced years. They did not prevent him from patronizing an intercommunity of deities. The rays of splendour, which he primarily intended should illuminate the temple of Jehovah, subsequently irradiated the groves, high places and altars, of his numerous wives and concubines. Thus he rendered idolatry

attractive and popular through the realm; and this laid the foundation of all those calamities which were afterwards experienced by the Jewish people.

In the character and conduct of his son Rehoboam, we perceive the progressive influence of power over weak minds; and how soon that prime object of government, the welfare of a community, is neglected by Sovereigns who are born to the luxuries, delusions, and flatteries which surround a throne. Rehoboam had forgotten the election of Saul, the renunciation of that family, and a second election of David his grandfather, who had been a shepherd's boy; nor did he advert, from these examples, to the incontestable maxim, that *Sovereigns are ordained for the people.* He foolishly imagined that the people were created for the pleasure of their Sovereigns; and instead of redressing the wrongs, and alleviating the burdens, under which they groaned from the costly splendour of Solomon, he upbraided the insolence of their application; and by the advice of ignorant counsellors he arrogantly told them, that he intended still more completely to treat them as beasts of burden; "saying, my father made your yoke heavy, and I will add to your yoke; my father

also chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions."*

The applicants had political virtue enough to resist the tyrant, without possessing the wisdom requisite for the undertaking. The contest terminated in a revolt, which divided the Israelites into two distinct nations, and was productive of numberless wars, during several generations.

The adherents to Rehoboam enjoyed the great advantage of *locality;* which had a religious influence of no small importance. According to the established law, the city of Jerusalem was the only place appointed for acceptable service; probably with a view of preventing the people from intermixing their worship with that of the idolaters, surrounding their respective districts. Jeroboam, whom the seceders had chosen to be their king, perceiving the dangers that would arise to himself from this circumstance, attempted to counteract its effects, by an expedient, which, as it was unlawful in itself, and must have been considered as profane by all true worshippers, had a natural tendency to alienate the minds of the ten revolting tribes

* 1 Kings ch. xii. v. 14.

from the service of the true God. "Jeroboam said in his heart, now shall the kingdom return to the house of David, if this people go up to do sacrifice in the house of the Lord in Jerusalem, then shall the heart of this people turn again unto their Lord, even unto Rehoboam king of Judah, and they shall kill me and go again to Rehoboam king of Judah." Whereupon the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold, and said unto them, "it is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem, behold thy gods O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt; and he set the one in Bethel, and the other put he in Dan: for the people went to worship before the one even unto Dan. And he made an house of high places, and made priests of the lowest of the people, which were not of the sons of Levi," &c.*

These proceedings had a natural tendency to relax the genuine principles of Monotheism, and to render the subjects an easy prey to the seductions of idolatry. We read accordingly, that in the space of about two hundred and fifty years, the whole kingdom of Israel became profligate as the surrounding nations; and equally ripe for destruction, as the countries which their

* 1 Kings ch. xii. v. 16, 32.

ancestors were permitted to supplant on account of their iniquities. They were completely subdued by Shalmenezer king of Assyria, carried into captivity, were blended with other nations, and as a distinct people, their names were effaced from the earth.

It is a singular fact, that not one of the kings of Israel was entirely free from idolatrous worship: they all "did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord;" and some of them were totally abandoned; particularly Ahab the son of Omri, who "did evil in the sight of the Lord above all that went before him." He did not so much as continue in that wretched compromise with true religion, which Jeroboam had introduced, but "he took to wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Zidonians, and went and served Baal and worshipped him; and he reared up an altar for Baal in the house of Baal which he had built in Samaria; and Ahab made a grove; and Ahab did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger, than all the kings of Israel that were before him."*

Jehu made some exertions to check the progress of idolatry; but his manner proclaimed the infamy of his own character. He was vio-

* 1 Kings ch. xvi. v. 30.

lent, savage, and treacherous. Being anointed to the kingdom by the prophet Elijah, he became a willing instrument in the hands of providence, to punish the iniquities of the house of Ahab. "But he took no heed to walk in the law of the Lord God of Israel; for he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam, who made Israel to sin."*

The degeneracy of their priesthood was equally rapid. From the commencement they had no dignity of character, for they were not of the tribe of Levi, but were taken out of the lowest of the people; and they always rendered themselves subservient to the schemes and plans of their sovereigns. They soon became the priests of Baal rather than of Jehovah; manifestly learned the arts of divination from the pagans, and practised their deceits to gratify the ambition of their principals. Many instances confirming this assertion might be adduced, but we shall only mention the following: when Ahab of Israel, in alliance with Jehoshaphat king of Judah, proposed to seize Ramoth of Gilead, Jehoshaphat hesitated, and "he said to the king of Israel, enquire I pray thee at the word of the Lord to day. Then the king of Israel gathered the prophets together, about

* 2 Kings ch. x. v. 31.

four hundred men, and said unto them shall I go against Ramoth Gilead to battle, or shall I forbear? And they said go up; for the Lord shall deliver it into the hand of the king." Jehoshaphat, not satisfied with the advice of these prophets, said, " is there not here a prophet of the Lord besides, that we might enquire of him?" The king of Israel mentioned one whom he hated, because he never prophesied good concerning him. Upon his being consulted, he asserted that under the government of Ahab, the people were as sheep without a shepherd; and also that the prophets whom he had consulted, were possessed of a lying spirit. The false prophets were believed and Ahab was slain.*

These were obviously the prophets whom Elijah challenged, ridiculed for their imbecilities, and destroyed for their impostures. It was also under the reign of this wicked king, that Elijah supposed that the worship of the true God was extinct. He was surprised at the information, that there were not less than seven thousand pious Israelites, who had not bowed the knee to Baal. However large this number may appear, collectively, it was obscured and lost in the multitudes of apostates, or the prophet would

* 1 Kings ch. xxii. v. 8.

not have made the following complaint, "because the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword, and I even I only am left; and they seek my life to take it away."*

Having thus traced, in a concise manner, the moral history of the ten tribes, we shall now direct our attention to the tribe of Judah.

Rehoboam had taken the resolution to wage war with the revolting Israelites, but he was forbidden by Shemaiah, the man of God. He received the priests and Levites that belonged to the disaffected tribes, whom Jeroboam had dismissed. His conduct during the three first years of his reign was approved, but "when he had established his kingdom and had strengthened himself, he forsook the law of the Lord; and it is said, that as a punishment "Shikah king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem, and took away the treasures of the house of the Lord, and the treasures of the king's house; he took all. He carried way also the shields of gold which Solomon had made."†

* 1 Kings, ch. xix. † 2 Chron. ch. xii.

Abijah his son who succeeded, adhered to the service of the true God. He engaged in a contest against the hosts of Jeroboam and was triumphant; "so that Jeroboam did not recover strength again in the days of Abijah." "The children of Israel were brought under at that time, and the children of Judah prevailed, because they relied upon the Lord God of their fathers."*

Asa was eminently pious. He exerted himself, with a well-directed zeal, to destroy idolatry in all its forms. In his days the kingdom acquired great strength. He was enabled to resist the attack of Zerah the Ethiopian, who came against him with a mighty host. By the advice of Oded the prophet, and of his son Azariah, he endeavoured to recover the ancient forms of worship; "Israel having been for a long season without the true God, without a teaching priest, and without the law;" and he entered into a solemn covenant to maintain the principles of true religion. Many subjects of the rival kingdom, who retained a veneration for the service of the true God, engaged also in these solemn acts. "They fell to him out of Israel in abundance, when they saw that the Lord his God was with him."†

* 2 Chron. ch. xiii. † 2 Chron. ch. xiv. xv.

His son and successor Jehoshaphat, continued the work of reformation. He gave orders to men of high authority to instruct the people, in all the cities of Judah; sending "Levites and priests who taught the people, having the books of the law with them." He appointed judges also who should "judge righteously, without taking bribes or respecting persons." The happy result was, that "the fear of the Lord fell upon all the kingdoms of the lands that were round about Judah, so that they made no war against Jehoshaphat. Some of the Philistines brought Jehoshaphat presents, and tribute silver; and the Arabians brought him flocks, seven thousand and seven hundred rams, and seven thousand and seven hundred he-goats."*

It was this sovereign who, in an alliance with Ahab king of Israel against the Samaritans, doubted the veracity of the prophets of Baal; and in the issue of the contest he escaped unhurt, while Ahab was slain by the enemy. Upon the devout humiliation of his people before the Lord, they were delivered from the powerful host of Moabites and Ammonites, who were collected together with a determination to destroy them.

* 2 Chron. xvi. xvii.

Of the humiliation and piety of this king, his dependence upon God at a season of extreme danger, when multitudes of the children of Ammon, Moab, and the inhabitants of mount Seir, combined together to invade and lay waste Judea, the animating promise of divine aid, and the prosperous result, we have an interesting account in the book of Chronicles.*

In two instances Jehoshaphat acted contrary to the usual tenor of his conduct. He associated both with Ahab, and with Ahaziah, the abandoned kings of Israel; which displeased the Lord.

Jehoram his son, formed an intimate alliance with the house of Israel, by marrying the daughter of Ahab: "and he wrought that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, walking in the ways of the house of Ahab." "In his days the Edomites revolted from under the dominion of Judah." Elijah the prophet predicted a plague that should fall upon the people, as a punishment for the wickedness of their sovereign, in which they concurred; and also the premature death of Jehoram by a painful disease. Jehoram was buried in the city of David, but was not deemed worthy of being

* 2 Chron. ch. xx.

buried in the sepulchres of their kings." His eldest son having been slain by the Arabians, Ahaziah his youngest son, assumed the reins of government. His mother was Athaliah, daughter of Omri king of Israel. He also "walked in the ways of the house of Ahab; for his mother was his counsellor to do wickedly."*

Jehu, who had overthrown the house of Ahab for its wickedness, was likewise appointed to be an instrument in the hands of Providence, to avenge the apostasy of Ahaziah. For when he went with Jehoram, the son of Ahab, to war against Hazael, king of Syria, Jehoram was slain by Jehu, "because he was the son of that Jehoshaphat who had sought the Lord with all his heart."

Athaliah, when she knew that her son was dead, destroyed all the royal seed of the house of Judah, excepting Joash, who was secreted by the daughter of king Jehoram. Athaliah was guilty of this slaughter, that she might usurp the throne in security. The young prince was concealed for the space of six years; when Jehoiada the priest, and several of the nobles, opposing the usurpation of Athaliah, by a well-concerted plan, restored to Joash the throne of

* 2 Chron. ch. xxii.

his ancestors; and Athaliah suffered a death worthy of her infamous conduct. This prince conducted himself properly during the life of Jehoiada. He reinstated the worship of the true God; collected treasures to repair the house of the Lord, for "the sons of Athaliah, that wicked woman, had broken up the house of God, and also all the dedicated things of the house of the Lord did they bestow upon Baalim." But after the death of Jehoiada, the princes of Judah left the house of the Lord God of their fathers, and served graven Idols. Zachariah the prophet, son of Jehoiada, remonstrated against their conduct; "and he was stoned to death at the commandment of the king, in the court of the house of the Lord." Thus "Joash remembered not the kindness which Jehoiada his father had done unto him, but slew his son."* We are informed that, as a punishment for his apostasy, the host of Syria came up against him; that they came to Judah and Jerusalem, destroyed all the princes of the people, from among the people, and sent all the spoils from them to the king of Damascus. "They came with a small company of men, and the Lord delivered a very great host into their hands, because they had forsaken the God of their

* 2 Chron. ch. xxiv. v. 20. 24.

fathers." He was slain in a conspiracyof his own servants; and was not buried in the sepulchres of his fathers.

Amaziah his son was a weak and irresolute prince. In some things "he did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, but not with a perfect heart." About to wage war against the Edomites, he numbered his hosts; and although he found that they amounted to three hundred thousand chosen men, he entered into an unnecessary alliance with the house of Israel, and hired one hundred thousand men of valour from thence. For this want of confidence in Jehovah, he was reproved by a man of God; and by his advice he dismissed the subsidized army; which was the occasion of much discontent. After he had vanquished the Edomites, he had the extreme folly to adopt their gods. For which "the anger of the Lord was kindled against Amaziah, and he sent him a prophet who said unto him, why hast thou sought after the gods of the people, which could not deliver their own people out of thine hand?" But he resented the reproof.* Elated with victory, he wantonly proposed to try his strength with Joash the king of Israel, who in vain admonished him of the unequal contest. The issue

* 2 Chron. ch. xxv. v. 15.

was that he was carried as a captive to his own city Jerusalem; the house of the Lord was plundered of its treasures; in the subsequent part of his reign a conspiracy was formed against him, as being disqualified to govern, he fled from the capital, and he was slain at Lachish.

Uzziah, the son of Amaziah, was aged sixteen years when he commenced his reign. He reigned fifty-two years in Jerusalem. "He sought God in the days of Zachariah, who had understanding in the visions of God; and as long as he sought the Lord, God made him to prosper." He was a warlike prince, and "had a host of fighting men, that went out to war by bands."—"The whole number of the chief of the fathers of the mighty men of valour, was two thousand and six hundred." "But when he was strong his heart was lifted up to his destruction." Like Saul he invaded the sacred and peculiar office of the priesthood, as established by the law of Moses; for "he went into the temple of the Lord to burn incense upon the altar of incense," and was wroth with the priest that reproved the profanation. For this offence he was punished with a leprosy, which not only rendered him incapable of governing, but he was totally secluded from social intercourse. His son Jotham administered judgment during the

remainder of his life, and succeeded him in the government.

Jotham reigned only sixteen years. His reign was favourable to the cause of true religion; and he was prosperous; but he was not able to restore the worship of God in its purity, "for the people did yet corruptly."*

His son Ahaz plunged into all the horrors of paganism. He walked in the ways of the kings of Israel: he made molten images for Baalim: he burnt incense in the valley of the son of Hinnom, and burnt his children in the fire after the abomination of the heathen. He fell a prey to the Syrians, by joining with the king of Israel against them. He formed an alliance with the king of Assyria, by whom he was plundered and betrayed. His afflictions rendered him more obstinate in his idolatrous practices, for he sacrificed to the Gods of Damascus that smote him, "saying, because the gods of the kings of Syria help them, I will sacrifice to them that they may help me."† "He cut in pieces the vessels of the house of God; shut up the doors of the house of the Lord; made altars in every corner of Jerusalem; and in every city of Judah he made high places, to burn incense unto other

* 2 Chron. ch. xxvii. † 2 Chron. ch. xxviii. v. 23.

Gods, and provoked to anger the Lord God of his father."

Hezekiah aimed at a complete restoration of that religion which had been not only neglected, but intentionally disgraced, under the former reign. He cleansed the temple, and prepared it for the solemn worship of God; he renewed the sacrifices that were appointed by the Mosaic law for a sin offering, or to make atonement for all Israel; issued orders that the passover, and the feast of unleavened bread, should be solemnly kept through the realm. "So that there was great joy in Jerusalem; for since the days of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel, there was not the like in Israel."

Animated by his example, the conduct and dispositions of the populace appeared to be totally changed. They were at once inspired with zeal for the honour of the true God. Those of Jerusalem, "went out to the cities of Judah, and brake the images in pieces, and cut down the groves, and threw down the high places and the altars out of all Judah and Benjamin, in Ephraim and Manasseh, until they had utterly destroyed them all."*

These acts of piety were amply rewarded.

* 2 Chron. ch. xxxi.

They inspired the king and his subjects with manly fortitude, and with a firm confidence in the God of their fathers, at a season of imminent danger; and they secured the interposition of providence in their defence. When Sennacherib, king of Assyria, had triumphed over every other opponent, and came up against Judah and Jerusalem with a mighty host, confident of success, Hezekiah, after he had employed the proper means of defence, "gathered the people together and spake comfortably to them, saying, be strong and courageous, be not afraid nor dismayed for the king of Assyria, nor for all the multitude that is with him; for there is more with us than with him; with him is an arm of flesh; but with us is the Lord our God to help us, and to fight our battles. And the people rested themselves upon the words of Hezekiah."* Sennacherib made use of every artifice to repress their ardour: boasted that the Gods of other nations were not able to deliver their votaries out of his hands; and warned them not to expect deliverance from the God whom they served. He also wrote letters speaking contumeously of the God of Israel; and attempted to terrify the garrison by addressing them in their own language, and with a view to dissemi-

* 2 Chron. ch. xxxii. v. 6.

nate discord; "speaking against the God of Jerusalem as against the gods of the people of the earth, which were the work of the hands of man." But "Hezekiah and the prophet Isaiah prayed and cried unto heaven." Their prayers were answered. The leaders and captains in the camp of the king of Assyria were destroyed by the immediate hand of God; Sennacherib returned home with confusion, and was slain by his own sons. The prosperity of Hezekiah was not favourable to piety. He became proud and ostentatious, and thus offended the Being who had protected him in so extraordinary a manner.

The long reign of Manasseh may be divided into two periods. In the first, "he did that which was evil, like unto all abominations of the heathen." In profaneness he exceeded the most irreligious of his predecessors; for he not only rebuilt the high places, reared up altars to Baalim, made groves and worshipped the host of heaven, but he built idolatrous altars in the house of the Lord. He also caused his children to pass through the fire; used enchantments and witchcraft, and dealt with familiar spirits, &c. Thus "he made Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to err, and to do worse than the heathens." But when he was taken captive by

surprise, was bound in fetters, and carried to Babylon, his afflictions had the most salutary influence. "He besought the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers." In consequence of his humiliation he recovered his liberty, returned to Jerusalem, and became very assiduous to restore that religion which he had so rashly attempted to destroy.

His son Amon was an idolater; he grew bold in iniquity, rendered himself obnoxious to his subjects, and was slain by his own servants.

Josiah, the son of Amon, though a child, was distinguished for his piety. He was but eight years old when he ascended his throne; in the eighth year of his reign he began to seek the God of the fathers; and in the twelfth year he commenced the arduous task of purifying Jerusalem and Judea from the high places, and the groves, and the carved and molten images, &c. and he exerted himself to the utmost in the restoration of true religion.

The following circumstance manifests to what an extent the worship of God, according to the command of Moses, had been neglected in the preceding reigns; and how imperfectly it was restored by those sovereigns who had made the attempt. As they were busily employed in examining and repairing the temple, "Hilkiah

the priest found a book of the law of the Lord given by Moses."* The discovery was announced to the king. The book was read before him ; and, according to the ancient custom, he rent his clothes, as expressive of his surprise and consternation at the deviations that had been so long practised. He was terrified at the universal and habitual neglect of the divine law; and dreading the judgments of heaven upon so wicked a people, he consulted the prophetess Huldah. She unreservedly foretold the evils that would come upon the land, after the death of Josiah ; " whom the Lord had spared because his heart was tender, and he humbled himself before his God." He solemnized the passover according to the law of Moses, and attempted to revive the service of the temple in its original purity. He unadvisedly interfered in a contest between Nicho, king of Egypt, and the king of Assyria ; and espousing the cause of the latter, he was mortally wounded. The solemnities observed at his funeral, were a testimony of his superior worth ; and these solemnities were enhanced by their being conducted by Jeremiah the prophet.

This rash act of Josiah was the occasional ed

* 2 Chron. ch. xxxiv. v. 14.

introductory cause, of all those sufferings from a foreign bondage, which the nation was destined to experience. In consequence of the victory obtained by the king of Egypt, the authority of this conqueror over Judah became so great, that he deposed Jehoahaz, whom the people had chosen, substituting his brother Eliakim, afterwards named Jehoiakim, in his place. The deposed prince was conveyed to Egypt.

After Jehoiakim had reigned eleven years, " doing that which was evil in the sight of the Lord his God," he was bound in fetters and carried to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar, who had conquered Judea. His son Jehoiachin, though a child, in the space of three months gave sufficient indications of a depraved disposition, and he suffered a similar fate. The temple was plundered of all its treasures, and this youth was carried to Babylon; Nebuchadnezzar having appointed Zedekiah his brother, king over Judah and Jerusalem. This was after a lapse of some years; for Zedekiah was one and twenty years old when he began to reign. He reigned eleven years. Despising the faithful and alarming admonitions of the prophet Jeremiah, " he, all the chief of the priests, and the people transgressed very much, after all the abominations

of the heathen, polluting the house of the Lord; and the Lord God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, rising up by times, and sending; because he had compassion on his people, and on his dwelling place: but they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people, till there was no remedy."* This man had the rashness to revolt against a power so much superior to his own, by which he invited his own destruction.

The dreadful period, so frequently predicted, was now arrived. The ages of their independency were passed; and a new epoch succeeded. Jerusalem was sacked and destroyed; the temple which had been so much neglected, and so frequently profaned, was now burnt to the ground, together with the goodly palaces of the great.

The son of Zedekiah was slain in his presence; his own eyes were put out, and he was carried captive to Babylon, together with the chiefs of the people. Gedaliah was made ruler over Judah. During the life, and under the mild administration of Gedaliah, those who remained

* 2 Chron. ch. xxxvi.

in the land enjoyed some degree of tranquillity; but he was murdered by a disaffected party; and all the inhabitants who were able to escape, fearing a severer government, fled into Egypt for safety, in opposition to the advice of the prophet Jeremiah; and in that land they suffered greater calamities than those which they had endeavoured to escape.

These distressful events manifested, too late, the dreadful consequences which followed the neglect of their ancestors to obey the injunctions of Moses, utterly to eradicate the practice of idolatry in the land of Judea, lest it should become a snare to them; and they perfectly corresponded with the menacing predictions of that Legislator, announced previous to their entrance into the land of Canaan.

The above epitome of the Jewish history, respecting their religious and moral character as a people, discovers to us their perverse propensities, and the persevering patience of Jehovah. In almost every period there was an opposition to the divine commands which astonishes; and the continued exertions of the Omnipotent, were necessary to counteract the effects of their repeated rebellions. Had not the divine energy

been in perpetual exercise, either by the direction of natural events, or by the more open manifestations of an interference, they would have sunk into all the horrors of idolatry without a remedy; and the whole moral world would have been involved in mental darkness. This energy was finally efficacious, in establishing among a particular people, an acknowledgment of the existence, unity, moral attributes, and exclusive sovereignty of the God of universal nature.

We were taught by the early part of the Jewish history, that no one can disobey the commands of God with impunity; no one can manifest a disposition to obey without a recompense: and we perceive from the minuter circumstances in the history of this peculiar people, that their idolatrous propensities constituted *the great offence.* Under the government that was strictly theocratical, their sovereign ruler considered this as the act of rebellion. When that form of government was discontinued, rewards and punishments, the smiles and the frowns of Providence, were dispensed in exact proportion, as king and subjects opposed or adopted, the impious absurdities of Pagan superstition. Whoever believes in a future state, believes that the moral conduct of individuals will be amenable to a future tribunal. There is also a righteousness which ex-

alteth a nation; and there are immoralities which conduct to ruin. Under the Jewish œconomy the unpardonable offence was *Idolatry*. The national virtue consisted in the patronage and observance of true religion. Neglects respecting these were invariably punished, obedience was amply rewarded.

When those persons whose general character and deportment were acceptable and exemplary, lapsed into the iniquities of paganism, they were still punished for this offence. Those who supported the cause of Monotheism were prosperous; notwithstanding many depravities in their character. After a contest with this people, from the days of Abraham to the return of the house of Judah from the captivity of Babylon, comprehending a space approaching to fourteen hundred years, Jehovah at length prevailed, and established his throne in the regions of Judea.

But to produce this effect, the instrumentality of the true prophets of the Lord constituted an essential part of the divine plan. Its influence and importance demand particular consideration.

SECT. VI.

ON THE INSTRUMENTALITY OF THE PROPHETS OF JEHOVAH, IN THE PRESERVATION OF TRUE RELIGION.

In addition to the promises and threats of the Almighty, so frequently repeated in the mosaic law; and with which the whole nation must, in every age, have been made acquainted, as often as the offices of true religion were performed; in addition to the constant experience of rulers and subjects in successive generations, assuring them that "it cannot be well with the wicked;" holy men, and inspired prophets, were repeatedly employed to instruct, direct, exhort, and admonish. These exerted every effort to stem the vast tides of irreligion and infidelity which threatened, at every period, to deluge the nation. Although their success did not equal their zeal, they still prevented depravity from being universal, and irremediable.

To these messengers of heaven, frequent reference is made in the historical parts of holy writ. They had different offices, and enjoyed different portions of the divine communication; but the moderns are not agreed respecting their

peculiar characteristics. We read of the *schools of the prophets;* by which it is not to be understood that the power of predicting future events was taught as a science. The term prophet is of a general signification. It was applied by heathens to all who were supposed to be conversant with divine things; and in the Scriptures many persons are considered as prophets who did not possess the gift of prophesying; as were Abraham and Aaron. The schools of the prophets appear to have been seminaries where religious truths, or the divine laws, were particularly taught; and as it is obvious from the preceding history, that the supreme Being prefers the use of Instruments to the utmost extent of their influence, thus we perceive that, generally speaking, those who were destined to higher offices, were selected from these schools.

In the historical writings of the Old Testament, these prophets are spoken of *as holy men of God, as Seers,* and *as Prophets,* in the most exalted sense of the term.

The first denomination seems to have been sometimes applied to men of exemplary piety, who assiduously studied the divine law, as communicated by their legislator Moses; who firmly believed in the predictions of the good and the evil that should attend the Israelites, according

to the tenor of their conduct; who were observant of the character of the times in which they lived; and who might be able to discern, the natural and inevitable consequences of particular modes of conduct, without the necessity of immediate inspiration. Knowing it to be an immutable principle, proclaimed by Jehovah himself, and confirmed by all the historical events with which they had made themselves acquainted, that strictly to obey the divine commands was in all cases, the wisest mode of acting, they were abundantly qualified to give the most salutary counsel, as often as they were consulted by their sovereigns, concerning the expediency or probable result of particular plans and enterprizes. We are told that Rehoboam was dissuaded from waging war against the revolting Israelites, by a man of God, without our being informed that he was immediately inspired. Amaziah, when he proposed to augment his force, by an improper alliance with the house of Israel, was prohibited by a man of God, who perceived the inexpediency and danger of associating with those, whose irreligious conduct foreboded destruction, and whose intimacy was contagious. In neither of the above instances is the necessity of an immediate revelation obvious.

But these men of God also received peculiar

communications upon certain emergencies. They were divinely appointed to execute some important commissions, and to predict certain events, which were not in the ordinary course of things, and far beyond the reach of human penetration. It was this which sometimes gave them the title of *Seers*. Thus Samuel who was commissioned to anoint Saul to be king over Israel, and was subsequently enabled to give him signs to direct his course, is called a *Seer*. "Samuel answered Saul, I am the Seer."* Hanan the *Seer* reproved Asa, king of Judah, for a want of confidence in his God, and predicted that he should have wars. Elijah and Elisha were eminent for these occasional inspirations; although they were ignorant of events which personally concerned themselves. But the higher class of Prophets were those who foretold important events which were to take place at distant periods; in which no human sagacity could avail; and which were most opposite to the natural conceptions or general expectations of mankind: as Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and the minor prophets. These having predicted events, which were not to be immediately accomplished, and some of which respected future generations, their predictions were committed to writing; and care-

* 1 Sam. ch. ix. v. 9.—ch. x.

fully preserved, under a conviction that they contained important truths, to be hereafter more fully revealed; and which were to receive their accomplishment at the appointed periods.

Opposed to these were constant successions of false prophets; who were extremely numerous in seasons of great degeneracy. They also were of different classes and characters. It appears, evidently, from various passages in sacred writ, that they were depraved or apostate Israelites. When the ten tribes revolted, and Jeroboam had introduced the worship of the two golden calves, to prevent his subjects from going up to Jerusalem, they did not, at the commencement, entirely forsake Jehovah. They professed to worship him under these emblems. But the adoption of one custom of the Pagans introduced another and before they forsook totally the God who brought them out of Egypt, they profanely worshipped him with the rites of paganism. The true worshippers of God being permitted to consult the oracle for direction, advice, and assistance, the advantage was too great and honourable not to be counterfeited; and these corruptors of the true religion, in the progress of their degeneracy, attempted to consult the oracles

of the living God, by all those superstitious modes of divination, enchantments, and even cruel and horrid rites, which characterised idolatry. They also converted their influence over the people into an engine of political power; making it subservient to their own interests, by complying with the desires of the people, and favouring the ambition of their sovereigns. So great was their progress in apostasy from the true worship, that they learned all the tricks of diviners and soothsayers of the heathens, and then attempted to persuade the ignorant among both princes and people, that they were inspired by the God of heaven.

Notwithstanding this conduct appears too profane to be credible, it is frequently mentioned as a fact, particularly during the reigns of Ahab and Hoshea.

The false prophets who professed to be the servants of Jehovah, claimed an equal power to advise, direct, and control, with that which was occasionally exercised by the true prophets of the Lord. Thus, in the reign of Zedekiah, king of Judah, Hananiah, the prophet of Gibeon, foretold that the yoke of Babylon should quickly be broken in opposition to the alarming denunciations of Jeremiah. He took the yoke from off the prophet Jeremiah's neck, and brake it:

" and Hananiah spake in the presence of all the people, saying, *thus saith the Lord;* even so will I break the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, from all the nations, within the space of two full years." The word of the Lord by Jeremiah, spake a different language, "Then said the prophet Jeremiah to Hananiah, *the Lord has not sent thee, but thou makest this people to trust in a lie.* Therefore thus saith the Lord, I will cast *thee* from the face of the earth. This year thou shalt die, because thou hast taught rebellion against the Lord. So Hananiah the prophet died the same year in the seventh month."*

It is plain also, from the instance already mentioned, of the superior credit given by Johanan and his followers, to the false prophets, concerning the policy of flying into Egypt, that they not only pretended to be inspired by the God of heaven, but they ventured to oppose the directions and counsel of the true prophets; for, encouraged by their bold assertions, " Johanan, and all the proud men, said unto Jeremiah, thou speakest falsely; the Lord our God has not sent thee to say, go not into Egypt to sojourn there."†

As imposition and falsehood are founded upon the most sordid self-interest, thus were the whole

* Jerem. ch. xxviii. † Jerem. ch. xliii. v. 2.

tribe of false prophets of a mercenary disposition. They sold their predictions, their blessings, their curses, for gain. The prophet Micah, complaining of the universal corruption of manners in Zion and Jerusalem, says, "the priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money; yet will they lean upon the Lord and say, is not the Lord among us? no evil can come upon us." Nehemiah asserted, as we have already noted, that a false prophet had been hired by Tobias and Sanballat to contradict him. Hence it was that they were always careful to utter whatever would be most grateful to their employers. But it was characteristic of the true prophets, that they were no respecters of persons, disdained every bribe, and spake the truth at the hazard of their lives. Micaiah was hated by Ahab, because he would not counsel and predict according to his desires, and was incessantly opposing his plans. An attempt was made, by the messenger that was sent to conduct him to the conference between Ahab and Jehoshaphat, to seduce him; "saying, behold now the words of the prophets declare good things to the king, with one mouth, let thy words I pray thee be like the words of one of them; and speak that which is good. Micaiah replied, "as the Lord liveth what the Lord sayeth

unto me that will I speak."* Ahab enquires of Elijah in terms of reproach, previously to his triumphant contest with the false prophets; "art thou he that troubleth Israel?" He boldly answers, "I have not troubled Israel, but *thou* and *thy father's house;* in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and thou hast followed Baalim."† When Jehoram, king of Israel, and Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, consulted Elisha, whether they should go against Moab to battle, Elisha testifies his respect for Jehoshaphat, who continued to be a worshipper of the true God, and his contempt for the Idolatrous house of Israel; saying unto the king of Israel, "what have I to do with thee? get thee to the prophets of thy father, and the prophets of thy mother; —As the Lord of hosts liveth, before whom I stand, were it not that I regard the presence of Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, I would not look towards thee nor see thee."‡

Elisha having cured Naaman, captain of the hosts of Syria, of his leprosy, by ordering him to wash in the river Jordan, Naaman was desirous of expressing his gratitude by a donation; "now therefore I pray thee take a blessing of thy servant; and Elisha said, as the Lord liveth before

* 1 Kings ch. xxii. v. 13. † 2 Kings ch. xviii. v. 17.
‡ 2 Kings ch. iii. v. 13.

whom I stand, I will receive none. And he urged him to take it, but he would not." But Gehazi, the servant of Elisha, ran after and demanded in the name of his master, a talent of silver, and two changes of garments, which he proposed to secrete for his own use. Elisha detected the fraud, and was empowered to inflict upon Gehazi, the disease of which Naaman had been cured.*

While these false prophets assiduously courted the favour of the great, many of the holy men of God suffered for their integrity. The king of Israel trusted to the more acceptable advice of *his* prophets, and confident of the success they had promised him, gave orders for the imprisonment of Micaiah, saying "put this fellow in the prison, and feed him with bread of affliction, and with water of affliction, until I return in peace." Micaiah answered with the intrepidity of an inspired prophet, "if thou return in peace at all, the Lord hath not spoken by me." Ahab was killed in the engagement by an arrow drawn at a venture. Zachariah was put to death for remonstrating against the idolatry of Joash, notwithstanding he had ascended the throne through the instrumentality of Zachariah's father. It is gene-

* 2 Kings ch. v.

rally supposed that Isaiah was one of the righte ous men murdered by Manasseh. Jeremiah was imprisoned by Zedekiah, king of Judah, because he had prophesied that Jerusalem would be taken by the king of Babylon.

It was to secure both sovereign and subject, from the deceptions of those pretenders, that the command not to pay any attention to them, should they happen to be fortunate in their prognostications, was so absolute. They could not be inspired by dæmons, for none existed. As their characters were infamous, and their motives always selfish, they were unworthy the inspiration of heaven, and they had it not. Every pretended prophecy must therefore be the suggestion of their own depraved hearts. There might be some coincidence occasionally, between what they had uttered with the imposing solemnity of an oracle, and subsequent facts, or delusion would cease of itself. In contingent circumstances, probabilities may be nearly equal, and a presumptive guess may be fortunate ; and this a credulous mind will magnify into a prediction accomplished. The confidence reposed even in the present day, in the residue of astrological pretensions with which

our Almanacks are filled, manifests the disposition to credulity which still exists; and we often perceive that one fortunate assertion establishes a character for infallibility, which it is not in the power of numberless mistakes to destroy. In order to protect the Israelites from such dangerous delusions, they were commanded not to repose their faith upon what could not be dictated by inspiration. Every competition between these impostors and the servants of the living God, was to be rejected with disdain. The promises, threats, and predictions of the latter, were inspired by the spirit of truth, and uttered with integrity. They could not deceive nor mislead; they related to important subjects, and were followed by important consequences.

The more we attend to the Jewish history, the more fully shall we be convinced, that the instrumentality of the prophets constituted an essential part of the divine plan, in the preservation of this people from being absorbed and lost in paganism. They were the leaven which diffused a quickening power over the whole mass; they were the salt which preserved it from total corruption. They possessed various portions of the divine illuminations, and a diversity of powers, according to the circumstances which demanded their aid; nor was there any

one instance of what may be deemed a superfluous communication.

In the high and important office committed to Moses, the first and greatest of prophets under the Jewish dispensation, the necessity of superior aid is most obvious, and it was most abundant. He was under the immediate direction of the Almighty and the Allwise, in every step he took, and in every arrangement that he made. It is manifest that three millions of people could not have been *dislodged* from the dwellings of their ancestors, in opposition to their native habits; be emancipated from a state of abject bondage under a powerful sovereign; be conducted through numberless difficulties and dangers; be organized into a regular and civil society; be induced to receive religious and moral discipline of the most perfect kind, in the midst of universal ignorance and depravity; be constituted a distinct people, in the midst of surrounding nations, and in opposition to their own propensity, without perpetual instruction and assistance from above. We observe accordingly, that in the language used by this great Legislator, and which pervades the whole of his own history, every event, and

every act is ascribed to the agency of heaven. But that peculiarity of style, indicative of this minute agency, ceases with him.

To Joshua, who was appointed to be the successor of Moses, and whose principal charge consisted in being their General, destined to lead them on to victory, the divine communications were not so frequent nor so extensive. The assurances and encouragements to him were, that he should triumph over the nations with whom he was to engage. "There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life." Have not I commanded you? Be strong and of good courage: Be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed, for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest."* The history of this Chief informs us that wherever human power was unequal to the purpose, the divine aid became conspicuous. But that he was not perpetually under the direction of heaven is obvious, by the fraud imposed upon him by the artful Gibeonites. This pious leader perceiving the strong propensity of the Israelites to associate with, and imitate the superstitions of the Pagans, rather than obey the commands of Moses to extirpate idolaters, warned them

* Jos. ch. i. v. 5, 9.

in prophetic language of the fatal consequences that would follow their disobedience. " If ye do in any wise go back, and cleave unto the remnant of these nations, and shall make marriages with them, know for a certainty that the Lord your God will no more drive out these nations from among you; but they shall be snares and traps unto you, and scourges in your sides, and thorns in your eyes, until ye perish from off this good land which the Lord your God hath given you."* The events proved the truth of the prediction.

Under the Judges, the influence of the established order of things, and of natural cases, was permitted to operate to a greater extent; and the evidences of supernatural agency proportionably decreased. Whenever they were successful, the hand of Providence was piously acknowledged; but their failures were imputed either to their own vices, or to such impediments as they were not able to counteract, by any natural means. Thus it is said, " the Lord was with Judah, and he drove out the inhabitants of the mountains, but they could not drive out the inhabitants of the valley, because they had chariots of iron."† It was not in the

* Jos. ch. xxiii. v. 12, 13. † Judges ch. i. v. 19.

plan of Providence always to insure success by miraculous interpositions.

During the life of Joshua, and of the Judges that immediately succeeded him, although there were several instances of an idolatrous propensity, and of partial deviations from the ordinances of Moses, yet, as a nation, "the people served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the Lord, that he did for Israel." But when "all that generation were gathered to their fathers, there arose another generation after them, which knew not the Lord, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel." Their history informs us that the degeneracy was rapid and extensive. They were sometimes severely punished by unsuccessful wars; and sometimes deliverers were raised up to prevent their being totally subdued by their enemies; by which their independence as a people would have ceased, and the plans of Providence would have been frustrated. The success of Deborah the prophetess was a remarkable instance of this kind. "She prevailed against Sisera, the captain of Jabin, king of Canaan,* and who had for twenty years

* Judges ch. iv.

mightily oppressed Israel." It was through the medium of a prophet, that Gideon was appointed to deliver Israel from the oppression of the Midianites; and the interpositions of Providence in his favour were many and striking.

The character, qualifications, and important services performed by the prophet Samuel, who was destined to new model the government, under the divine direction, have been particularly noticed in the preceding epitome of the Jewish history.

The diversities of character and talents, and the consequent diversities of conduct under a monarchical government, frequently demanded directions, admonitions, and restraints. Wherever there is a power merely human, there will be a strong propensity to abuse it; and the abuse of uncontrolled power must be productive of the most pernicious consequences. Even the pious David, required the admonitions and severe reproofs of a prophet. During the early reign of Solomon, and while he conducted himself in a manner correspondent with the superior wisdom with which he was endowed, he was honoured with evidences of the divine favour; but, upon his being seduced into idolatrous practices, Ahijah the prophet was ordered to predict the division of his king-

dom, which took place in the succeeding reign, and was the occasion of so much subsequent wickedness and misery.

Thus were the holy men of God empowered to act as legislators, rulers, judges over Israel, and also, upon some occasions, to make important changes in the state. When the government had acquired a due consistency, and was firmly established, they no longer acted as judges, rulers, and authoritative directors, but they appeared in the important character of inspired monitors. Of this we have already adduced several instances. The total apostasy of the ten tribes, and the successive impieties of their sovereigns, the many dangerous aberrations of the kings of Judah, would have proved fatal to the cause of Monotheism, had not inspired prophets arisen at different periods, to bear witness to the truth, to admonish, to threaten, to console, and to encourage.

Some of these prophets were raised up for particular purposes. Thus we hear no more of Jonah than that he was appointed to preach repentance to the inhabitants of Ninevah; and we are told that in consequence of obedience, their destruction was deferred for the space of forty years. As far as the prophecies of Joel relate to the period in which he lived, " they fore-

tel calamities, denounce judgments, and promise future blessings," without the immediate application of them to any particular people. Hosea chiefly admonishes the ten revolting tribes, and exposes their enormities with all the poignancy of language. The denunciations of Amos are directed against the kingdom of Israel, predicting its total overthrow. They extend also to the Syrians, Tyrians, and inhabitants of Palestine, and other surrounding nations, who had been the principal seducers of Israel. Several of these prophets explicitly foretel the miseries that should befall the house of Judah and the city of Jerusalem, for their repeated rebellions and superficial reformations; and warn them that nothing can prevent their captivity by Nebuchadnezzar, but a speedy repentance.

The prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel, possessed large portions of the prophetic spirit, and in a manner peculiarly adapted to their respective situations. Isaiah began to prophesy in the last years of Uzziah. He lived through the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah, to the times of Manasseh. He exerted all the zeal and energy with which he was so eminently inspired, in pious admonitions, counsels, warnings, and also in the administration of comfort,

during a long series of years, according as the character and conduct of princes and people might demand. Isaiah was the friend and counsellor of the good Hezekiah, and inspired him with courage to resist the boasting Sennacherib, by the assurance that his numerous and proud hosts should be destroyed, by the immediate hand of Providence. His prophecies embraced the history of all the nations that had an intercourse with Judea. They were not only directed against the Moabites, and the countries immediately contiguous, but they extended to Asyria, to Egypt, to Ethiopia. He was empowed to protract the life of Hezekiah; to predict the captivity of his descendants; the restoration of the Jews from their captive state; their return to Jerusalem, under the patronage of the great Cyrus, king of Persia, and the total destruction of their oppressors. His censures of idolatry were peculiarly severe and poignant: his promises of reconciliation with heaven by repentance, were most encouraging: and he described their future peace and prosperity, in the most glowing colours. His prophecies, which relate to future ages, and to blessings reserved for Gentile nations, were numerous and striking; of which we shall hereafter produce instances.

Jeremiah lived through the successive reigns of Josiah, Jehoiakim, Jehoiakin, and Zedekiah. He also continued to exhort, admonish, and threaten; intermixing consolatory promises, according to the prevalent dispositions of the people. He personally witnessed the calamities which finally overpowered the Jewish state; and strenuously preached repentance in every stage, as the only method to escape more dreadful manifestations of the divine wrath. He incessantly opposed the false prophets who soothingly spake *peace, peace,* where there was no peace, and were thus inspiring the king and the leaders of the people with presumptive hopes, as from the Lord, while they continued in a state of impenitence. His zeal was calumniated: he was represented as an enemy to the state, by discouraging the government in its resistance to Nebuchadnezzar's arms: he was threatened with death; treated with ignominy, and thrown into a loathsome dungeon. But his integrity was unshaken, and his ardour in the cause of God undiminished. He not only predicted the destruction of Jerusalem, and the captivity of the chiefs, but he distinctly mentioned the term of it, that its duration should be seventy years. So confident was he of the truth of his own predictions, that he afterwards

wrote letters to the captives, exhorting them, in the name of the God of Israel, "build ye houses and dwell in them, and plant gardens and eat the fruit of them, take ye wives and beget sons and daughters; that ye may increase there and not diminish, and seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captive; and pray unto the Lord for it, for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace."* These injunctions were founded upon the promise, "for lo! the days come saith the Lord, that I will bring again the captivity of my people Israel and Judah; and I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it."†

When Johanan, in opposition to his counsels and predictions, fled into Egypt with the remnant of Judah, taking Jeremiah with him also, the prophetic spirit continued with Jeremiah. He now admonishes, with equal zeal and fidelity, the idolatrous Israelites who had fled into Egypt, in contempt of the divine authority; denouncing the dreadful sentence "that none of the remnant of Judah, which are gone into the land of Egypt to sojourn there, shall escape, or remain; that they should return into the land of Judah, to which they have a desire to return to

* Jerem. ch. xxix. † Jerem. ch. xxx. v. 3.

dwell there; for none shall return," that is, in a collective body.* This prophet foretold also the defeat of Pharaoh's army, and the conquest of Egypt by Nebuchadnezzar; the destruction of the Philistines; the punishment, and subsequent restoration of the Moabites and Ammonites, &c. and finally, the invasion and total destruction of Babylon, for the oppressions of Judah.

Ezekiel was among those who were taken to Babylon with their king Jehoiakin. He received the important commission to reprove the idolatrous practices, which were retained by many of the captives; to counteract the pernicious influence which the false prophets still exerted over them; and to assuage the spirit of discontent and complaint, manifested by others at the severity of their afflictions; assuring them that Jerusalem was to suffer much greater calamities, than those to which they were exposed in their captive state, or to which they had hitherto been witnesses. He reiterated the necessity of repentance and reformation, as the only means of being restored to the divine favour. His predictions extended to the nations which had been the seducers of Israel to the practice of idolatry, or had oppressed them by

* Jerem. ch. xliv. v. 14.

the power of their arms. He encourages a spirit of repentance, and animates them to return to the service of the God of Jacob, by representing, in a prophetic vision, the rebuilding of the temple, and restoration of the true worship, the destruction of idolatry, as well as their happy possession of the abode of their ancestors.

Although the prophecies of Daniel chiefly relate to future times, and to events in which Gentile nations were to become partakers, the services which he rendered to the captive Jews were eminently great. The superiority of his wisdom over all the men in the realm, renowned for that quality; the facility with which he interpreted dreams that were inexplicable by others; his conscientious adherence to the worship of the true God, in defiance of every threat and every suffering, not only raised his reputation in the court of his sovereign, but extended their beneficial effects over the children of the captivity. When "the king made Daniel a great man, and gave him many great gifts, and made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and chief of the governors over all the wise men of Babylon," we may rest assured, that he would seek the prosperity of the Lord's people. We learn accordingly, that he obtained leave to place Shadrach, Meshach,

and Abednego, over the affairs of the province of Babylon. When his enemies sought his destruction, by a proposal with which they knew he could not comply, but to which the king, in an hour of vanity, consented, the persevering piety of Daniel gained him an universal conquest. He was miraculously preserved from the destruction which his enemies thought to be inevitable, while they were caught in the snare they had invidiously laid; and this miraculous preservation not only triumphed over the *decree* of the sovereign, but over his *mind* also. He was taught by it to revere the God of the Hebrews; for "he made a decree that in every dominion of his kingdom, men should tremble and fear before the God of Daniel." A decree of this kind, rendered the captives honourable in the eyes of their conquerors; was a pledge that they would be treated with the kindness, which should enable them to bear their captivity with patience, and prepare the way for their subsequent release.

Upon the eve of their return to Judea, and during that important period, the prophets Haggai, Zechariah, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Malachi, were raised up to persuade, animate, counsel, reprove, assist. By their aid the people were enabled to form the boldest resolu-

tions, and encounter many perils; thus did they finally rebuild the temple, and reinstate the worship of the true God, in the midst of numberless dangers and difficulties.

Through the whole of the divine œconomy respecting this people, from their emigration out of Egypt to their return from the Babylonish captivity, embracing a period of nearly nine hundred years, a succession of holy men and prophets was thus appointed, who were endowed with qualifications precisely adapted to the exigencies of every stage. Notwithstanding the diversity of their gifts, the object was *one*. It was uniformly their aim to preserve or reinstate true religion; and to counteract the disposition to apostatize that was so prevalent among this people. They were authorized to direct, to counsel, to punish, to predict punishment, to encourage or to reward, according to the exigencies of the case, or the tenor of conduct. Some of these prophets were enabled to penetrate deeply into futurity. They foresaw calamities in the midst of prosperity; destruction in the midst of security; and future deliverance through the gloom of present consternation and distress. Although many of their predictions were expressed in figurative and obscure terms, yet no obscurities

concealed the judgments which were denounced against impiety, or the promises of felicity to the obedient. The style and manner of these prophets were perfectly adapted to the character of those ruder times, and to the capacities and conceptions of an ignorant and perverse people, while they possessed an elevation suited to the cause which animated their breasts, soaring far beyond compositions merely human. To conquer the prevalent insensibility of this people, they borrow images and allusions from every part of nature, from every habit and custom with which the people were most familiar, and which were most correspondent with their prevalent ideas. As powerful hurricanes will rouse chaff and dust from the earth, to a height that creates sublimity, thus did the impetuous earnestness of their expostulations, give an elevation and grandeur to images most adapted to the comprehension of the populace, without stooping to a refined attention to the materials of which they were composed. Sometimes with an indignant tone, and in sarcastic language, they pour contempt upon the folly of "saying to the work of men's hands, be ye our gods." Sometimes they attempt to alarm and terrify by a denunciation of judgments; and to inspire reverential awe by representing the

Creator of all things, in the plenitude of his power, and insuperable majesty. At others, their counsels, reproofs, admonitions, were delivered in such pathetic strains of eloquence, as must have affected every mind that was not callous to the influence of moral suasion. The adorable attributes of the God who demanded their service, are placed in contrast with the contemptible images, and nonentities, whom the heathens vainly worshipped. The infinite benignity of his nature, is opposed to the ferocity of the gods that required human victims, and inspired their votaries with insufferable terror. To win upon the ingenuous affections of the heart, they condescend to expostulate, as if they were asking a favour in behalf of the great Jehovah ; as if his felicity could be augmented by their welfare. In a word, the grandeur, the importance of true religion, the stupidity of pagan superstitions, and the still greater stupidity of the Israelites in giving them the preference, are represented in such animated language, that nothing remained to complete the folly of this obdurate people, but the prevalent indifference and contempt with which such admonitions were received.

Yet these pious efforts were not in vain. They greatly checked the profligacies of the

times: They were instrumental in preserving Judah from too free an intercourse with the apostate tribes of Israel: They encouraged all their pious kings to oppose idolatry, and assisted them in the work of reformation: They were a powerful counterpoise to the destructive influence, which the false prophets were perpetually exerting, over both Sovereign and people. The number of these false prophets must, at some periods, have been immensely great; for when idolatrous worship prevailed, altars were erected, and groves consecrated, in every part of the land; and as each of these required their officiating priests, diviners, soothsayers, &c. the noxious tribes of impostors thus generated, would have become so extensive and powerful, that true religion would have been completely extinguished, had not the prophets of the Lord intervened upon urgent occasions, to detect their falsehoods, and alarm those who were tempted to confide in them. It was through their prophetic warnings, respecting the dispersion of the ten tribes, the captivity of Judah, the destruction of Jerusalem; their assurances that the house of Judah should not remain in perpetual bondage, but be restored to the divine favour, upon repentance and reformation; it was through their influence over the minds of the conquerors, and

the assistance they afforded to the returning penitents, that the great work of reformation was finally accomplished. This brings us to the last period of the Jewish history which demands our attention.

SECT. VII.

ON THE CAPTIVITY OF THE TRIBES OF JUDAH AND BENJAMIN, AND ITS SALUTARY EFFECT IN THE FINAL ESTABLISHMENT OF MONOTHEISM IN THE LAND OF JUDEA.

When the dreadful hour was come;—when kings, the princes of the people, and the elders, were led away into captivity;—when they were torn from their native soil, leaving relatives and valuable possessions behind, and hurried into a foreign country, uncertain of the treatment they should receive, and their fears portending the worst;—the hour of reflection might also be expected to arrive; and it did arrive. The subsequent history of this extraordinary people evinces, that the influence of deep affliction was powerful to effect a cure, although every other expedient had failed. The alarms, disgrace, and numberless sufferings incident to a state of bondage, accomplished a purpose, to which distinguished blessings, temporary punish-

ments, and the most awful and reiterated threat, proved inadequate. Their minds were no longer agitated by the tumults of war, for the conflict was over, and they were subdued. They were no longer abandoned to their seductive pleasures, which had hardened their hearts, blinded their eyes, and rendered their ears deaf, for they were in the abyss of distress. The utmost they could expect, when settled in their new abodes, would be, to become as it were one passive body of afflicted members. They now would have leisure to recollect their former state of affluence and independence, and to lament the contrast. The most considerate among them, and the best informed, would now be convinced that the prophets who had promised security and worldly honours, while they remained slaves to idolatry, were *lying* prophets; and that those who had incurred their resentments, who had been disgraced and calumniated, for prophesying *unpleasant* things, *were of a truth the messengers of the living God.* Now neglected predictions assumed all their consequence: warnings despised, became affecting realities: unwelcome admonitions and threats now were changed into historical events; and in that afflictive form, forced conviction upon their unbelieving minds. They would doubtless recol-

lect the anticipations of Isaiah when he exclaimed, "woe unto them that rise up early in the morning that they may follow strong drink; that continue until night, till wine inflame them; and the harp, and the viol, and the tabret, and the pipe, and the wine are in their feasts; but they regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the operation of his hands. Therefore my people are gone into captivity, because they have no knowledge; and their honourable men are famished, and their multitude are dried up with thirst."* Nor would the predictions of Amos any longer be considered as vain and empty threats; "Woe unto them that are at ease in Zion, that put far away the evil day, and cause the seat of violence to come near; that lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the stall; that chaunt to the sound of the viol, and invent to themselves instruments of music like David; that drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief ointment, but they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph. Therefore shall they go to captivity, and the banquet of them that stretched themselves shall be removed."† Those words of Jeremiah also, whom it is probable some of these captives had personally

* Isaiah ch. v. v. 11, 13. † Amos ch. vi. v. 1, 7.

insulted, as a lying prophet, would now be remembered with compunction of heart; "To whom shall I speak and give warning that they may hear? behold their ear is uncircumcised and they cannot hearken; behold the word of the Lord is unto them a reproach; they have no delight in it! Therefore I am full of the fury of the Lord; I am weary with holding in; I will pour it out upon the children abroad; and upon the assembly of young men together; for even the husband with the wife shall be taken, the aged with him that is full of days; and their houses shall be turned unto others, with their fields and wives together, for I will stretch out my hand upon the inhabitants of the land, saith the Lord."*

As most of the prophets predicted this great event, we may presume that in their degraded state, the captives would recall to their remembrance numberless passages of a similar import.

Their immediate sufferings, and such recollections as these united, had a natural tendency to wean them from a confidence in graven images, and the worship of those that were no gods; and they would be disposed to exclaim in the language of their ancestors, when they

* Jerem. ch. vi. v. 10—13.

were surprised and confounded at the triumph of Elijah over the false prophets, "*Jehovah he is the God; Jehovah he is the God.*"

Such sentiments being deeply impressed upon their minds at an early period, were obviously preserved and cherished, not only among the immediate sufferers, but by the rising generation, in the progressive years of their captivity, by a series of interesting events which took place at different seasons. They could not be ignorant, that the elevation of their countryman and fellow sufferer Daniel, to the most exalted station in Chaldea, was entirely owing to the great superiority of *his* wisdom over that of the most renowned magicians: and that he was inspired with this superior wisdom by the Jehovah of Israel. They were doubtless informed of the danger and miraculous preservation of the three conscientious Governors, when they were in the fiery furnace, because they refused to worship the golden image erected in the plains of Dura. The triumph of Daniel over his enemies, when he was cast into the den of lions, and escaped unhurt, because he persevered in his prayers and supplications to his God, in opposition to the royal mandate, must have made a deep impression upon their minds; must have had a tendency to alienate them from the service of idols which never had delivered, and never could de-

liver any of their worshippers. The solemn acknowledgment also of Darius, the king, when he was astonished at the preservation of Daniel, that " the God of Daniel is the living God, and stedfast for ever; his kingdom shall not be destroyed, and his dominion shall be to the end;" must have inspired them with such an exultation and confidence in the divine superiority, as would prevent them from relapsing into their former follies.

Upon the eve of their return, the deep veneration expressed by the great Cyrus for the God of the Hebrews, manifested by the peculiar patronage bestowed upon these captives, because they were professedly his servants, and by his liberal grants to enable them to rebuild their temple, and reinstate the worship of Jehovah in its pristine splendour, must have struck their minds as a complete conquest over the gods of the heathens.

Thus were they gradually prepared, during the several stages of their sojournment in Chaldea, to return to the land of their fathers, according to the predictions of their prophets. Their knowledge of these predictions, united with the events which gradually unfolded their accomplishment, would naturally dispose and encourage them to pursue the necessary measures, when the favourable opportunity arrived.

In the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, we have circumstantial narratives of the methods by which the return of this scattered people, at different periods, and their reorganization in the land of Judea, was effected. We shall refer our readers to these records for numerous particulars, introductory of a new and important æra to the children of Israel; and shall solely direct our attention to those circumstances, which manifested and confirmed a total change of character.

The first detachment under Zerubbabel, amounting to upwards of fifty thousand souls, testified their piety by immediately erecting an altar "to offer burnt offerings thereon, to the God of Israel, as it is written in the law of Moses the man of God; and although fear was upon them because of the people of these countries, yet they burnt offerings thereon unto the Lord morning and evening. They also kept the feast of tabernacles, and all the set feasts of the Lord that were consecrated." But the foundation of the temple of the Lord was not yet laid, and they testified an ardent zeal for the work, by "giving money unto the masons, and to the carpenters; and meat and drink and oil unto them of Zidon, and unto them of Tyre, to bring cedar trees from Lebanon to the sea of Joppa,

according to the grant they had of Cyrus, king of Persia."

Few of those who were carried captive at an early period with their king Jehoiakim, could have remained alive; but many of the younger captives, when the city was sacked, and the house of God destroyed by fire, under the weak and wicked Zedekiah, might, in their advanced years, be witnesses to the important change. The multitude, however, were strangers to the splendour of the first temple; their joy and exultation was great, and unalloyed by any unpleasant reflections, which might have arisen from a comparison of former days with the present. The different emotions of these two classes, are described in a simple but affecting manner. The solemn act of laying the foundation of the temple was accompanied with every demonstration of pious joy. "They set the priests in their apparel with trumpets, and the Levites, the sons of Asaph, with cymbols, to praise the Lord after the ordinance of David, king of Israel; and they sang together in course in praising and giving thanks unto Jehovah, because he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever towards Israel. And the people shouted with a great shout when they praised the Lord, because the foundation of the house of the Lord was

laid. But many of the priests and Levites, and chief of the fathers, who were ancient men, that had seen the first house, when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes, wept with a loud voice; and many shouted aloud for joy, so that the people could not discern the shout of joy for the noise of the weeping of the people."

Many of those who had continued in Judea, and had been deeply contaminated with the abominations of idolatry; and also the inhabitants of Samaria, who were very imperfect proselytes to the Jewish religion, were ambitious to share in the honours of the new establishment; but they would have been dangerous associates, and their application was rejected. The refusal excited an inveterate resentment, and produced such malicious and artful misrepresentations, that the work was suspended during the life of Artaxerxes. But in the second year of Darius, the original grant of Cyrus was examined, and enforced under the protection of the sovereign; and the work was re-commenced with renewed vigour. The undertaking of Zerubbabel and Joshua was assisted and encouraged, by the prophets Haggai and Zachariah. The temple was finally built and finished, "according to the commandment of the God of Israel, and accord-

ing to the commandments of Cyrus and Darius, and Artaxerxes, king of Persia." The event was celebrated with a religious solemnity suitable to the occasion.

The sacred edifice being completed, the office of restoring the worship of Jehovah in its original purity devolved upon Ezra. He was a priest of distinction, and "a ready scribe in the law of Moses, which the Lord God of Israel had given." Moreover "he had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments." The king not only granted his request, that he might visit Jerusalem with as many of the captives as chose to accompany him, but opened his treasures in the most liberal manner, and gave him full power to enforce the regulations which he might deem necessary, by inflicting punishments according to the aggravations of the offence.

Ezra does not declare himself to be a prophet, nor have we any evidences of his having prophesied. In the office assigned to him the gift of prophecy was not necessary. Accuracy, fidelity, piety, and persevering zeal, alone were requisite; and these he possessed to an eminent degree. To him is generally ascribed the compilation which is now received as sacred records;

and if we compare them with the books of the Apocrypha, we shall perceive their great superiority in a dignified simplicity of language, in the harmony of the arrangements, in a correspondence with the divine character, as the unrivalled Sovereign over universal nature, and in an exemption from every thing which is superfluously miraculous, or marvellous and unworthy of credit. It is obvious that at this period Ezra, with many other leaders and elders of the people, had acquired a minute knowledge of the law of Moses, and of the divine œconomy respecting the children of Israel, during the many ages of their existence.

Ezra and his companions, among whom he took care to procure a competent number of priests and Levites, set out upon their journey from Babylon; which, as they had many enemies, was a dangerous enterprize; but as it evinced more piety, so in this case it was more prudent, to commit himself and his associates to the protection of heaven, than to procure a military escort from his sovereign, which might have been interpreted by all, as a want of confidence in his God. He therefore sought the divine protection by fasting and prayer. "I proclaimed a fast, says he, at the river Ahava, that we might afflict ourselves before God, to seek of him a

right way for us, and for our little ones, and for all our substance; for I was ashamed to require of the king a band of soldiers and horsemen, to help us against the enemy in the way; because we had spoken unto the king, saying, the hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek him; but his power and his wrath is upon all them that forsake him. So we fasted and besought our God for this, and he was entreated of us."

Immediately upon his arrival at Jerusalem, when he delivered his commission to the king's lieutenants, he was astonished and confounded at the information that some of the captives, who had returned with Zerubbabel, began to deviate from the purity of their principles, by intermarrying with the idolatrous inhabitants of the land. Nor was the trespass confined to the lower ranks, for the princes and rulers had set the example. The experience of ages had manifested the fatal effects of such a conduct. Ezra pathetically describes the distress and anguish of his mind, on account of this flagrant and dangerous impropriety. His lamentations, fastings, and prayers, made such an impression upon the offenders themselves, that one of them, Shecaniah, the son of Jehiel, acknowledged the trespass, and convinced of its extreme danger, as well as

impiety, proposed, "let us make a covenant with our God to put away all the wives, and such as are born of them, according to the counsel of my Lord, and of those that tremble at the commandment of our God; and let it be done according to the law." The proposition was universally accepted, and the result was a complete reformation.

They proceeded in the next place to rebuild the ruined walls of Jerusalem. This was resisted by their enemies to the utmost of their power. Nehemiah, who was at the court of Artaxerxes, being informed by Hanam of the vexatious opposition, was exceedingly dejected. The king, who saw the sadness of his countenance, and being informed of the cause, permitted the prophet to visit the ancient city, for a limited time. He was deeply affected at the inspection he made of the ruined state of its walls, and he animated the Israelites to rebuild them, regardless of all opposition. The attempt was strongly resisted by Sanballat and others, who for some time concealed their fears, by the ridicule and contempt with which they affected to treat it. But when they were witnesses to the quick advances made, they became virulent, and con-

spired together to frustrate the design by treachery. The pious zeal of the Israelites was manifested, by the persevering ardour with which they exposed themselves to danger. The builders, to prevent their being surprised by their adversaries, worked with their swords by their sides; and the other labourers bore their burdens with one hand, and the weapons of defence with the other. Sanballat attempted also to terrify Nehemiah, by making him acquainted with a report which prevailed, but which he himself had invented, that Nehemiah had seditious views, and was making himself popular that he might assume the reins of government. Shemaiah also, a false prophet, was hired to discourage Nehemiah, by insinuating that the design was so opposite to the will of God, that he would certainly be destroyed, if he did not take refuge in the temple. "He was hired," says the prophet, "that I should be afraid, and do so and sin, that they might have matter for an evil report and reproach me."

The walls of the city being finally built, and the community enjoying some degree of security, "all the people gathered themselves together as one man," and proceeded to the solemn act, by which they acquired a more accurate knowledge of the divine law, and their dispositions to

observe it were confirmed. At their request, Ezra, with his several coadjutors, "read in the book of the law of God distinctly, from the morning until mid-day, before the men and the women, and those that could understand, and gave the sense, and caused to understand the reading; and the ears of the people were attentive unto the book of the law. When Ezra opened the book all the people stood up; and Ezra blessed the Lord the great God; and all the people answered Amen and Amen, with lifting up of their hands; and they bowed their heads and worshipped the Lord with their faces to the ground." The people were deeply affected with the scene, and they wept when they heard the words of the law. Assured of the sincerity of their repentance, and firmness of their resolutions, Nehemiah, Ezra, and the Levites who taught the people, intimated to them their conviction that the days of lamentation were now passed; for they were re-admitted into the divine favour, and therefore it was a day for exultation and joy. "This day is holy unto our Lord; neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the Lord is your strength."

To confirm these favourable impressions, and

to render them indelible, a general fast was afterwards appointed and religiously observed. " The seed of Israel separated themselves from all strangers, and stood and confessed their sins, and the iniquity of their fathers." The Levites enumerated, in a devout address to their God, the extraordinary blessings and deliverances by which the nation had been distinguished, from the call of Abraham to their return from captivity; acknowledged the numerous transgressions of their ancestors, and their own; extolled the patience and long-suffering of the God of mercy, and earnestly prayed that the various dispensations of Providence towards them might not be in vain. " Now therefore our God, the great, the mighty, and the terrible God, who keepest covenant and mercy, let not all the trouble seem little before thee, that hath come upon us, on our kings, on our princes, and on our priests, and on our prophets, and on our fathers, and on all the people, since the times of the kings of Assyria unto this day." This devout act was succeeded by their public assent to a written covenant to which Princes, Levites, and Priests, had set their seal, " that they would walk in God's law, which was given by Moses the servant of God, and that they would observe and do all the command-

ments of the Lord their God, his judgments and his statutes;" that they would break through every evil habit, and resist every future temptation.

They afterwards proceeded to regulate their civil concerns, and to appoint the respective abodes both of priests and people. The rulers of the people dwelt at Jerusalem. Nine tenths were destined by lots to inhabit the other cities of Judah, and one tenth to continue in Jerusalem. This being the post of the greatest danger, "the people blessed all the men that willingly offered themselves to dwell at Jerusalem." The walls of Jerusalem were solemnly dedicated with great festivity, and with every mark of grateful joy. They separated also from the Ammonites and Moabites, upon discovering that, by the law of Moses, they were commanded to be a distinct people. This command was founded upon the refusal of these nations to grant the assistance solicited by the Israelites, upon their first approach to the land of Canaan; but its moral tendency is most obvious. Nehemiah, being obliged to visit the court of Artaxerxes at the stipulated time, the above separation was not so complete as the law had

enjoined; for Eliashib the priest, manifested a partiality for Tobias who was an alien, because by marriage he became related to him. This was resented by Nehemiah at his return to Jerusalem, with great indignation. He corrected other abuses respecting the priesthood, and the observance of the sabbath. He reclaimed also some who had intermarried with the neighbouring nations.

Thus finally was a new æra introduced among this wonderful people. Their religion was restored to its primitive purity. Their former sufferings, and their encouragements to expect future peace and prosperity, by an observance of the divine laws, at length subdued their minds to obedience; and they made every sacrifice required of them by those pious leaders, Ezra and Nehemiah. As a people they did not return to a state of independence, nor was the royal dignity immediately restored. They were tributary to foreign powers, and they had various connexions with the neighbouring nations; but as a people they remained stedfast to their religious principles. The general propensity to the worship of Idols was totally subdued; and they became *Monotheists* in the strictest sense of the

term. To this point all the Dispensations of God were directed; and it is precisely at this point that the sacred history terminated.

The whole current of profane history bears witness to the permanency of this wonderful change! A people whose ancestors were ignominiously prone to idolatry, through a series of ages, in opposition to every principle of common sense, to the express prohibitions of Jehovah, and to every motive of gratitude or of interest, have continued firm in their abhorrence of idolatry, and in their adherence to pure Monotheism, under every persecution. They have carried their principles with them wherever they were dispersed. They have submitted to every indignity which ignorance or bigotry could inflict, and resisted every temptation to adopt the customs of the nations among whom they dwelt; and they are, to this day, a monument of the final and permanent efficacy of those means which the Supreme Director employed, completely to separate them from an idolatrous world.*

* See Note L.

CHAPTER III.

ON THE SELECTION OF THE JEWISH NATION FROM THE PAGAN WORLD, AS INTRODUCTORY TO A DISPENSATION BY WHICH ALL THE NATIONS OF THE EARTH ARE TO BE BLESSED.

SECT. I.

The moral character of the Jewish nation did not entitle them to this exclusive honour.

We have seen that the Jews, and the Jews alone, as a nation, finally became Monotheists, and that "unto them were committed the oracles of God." We shall now enquire for what purposes this people were chosen from the general mass, and rendered a deposit of divine truths; that we may be able to trace the immediate effects of the plan, as introductory to the Christian revelation. The enquiry will also enable us to appreciate the national character of the ancient Jews, in a proper manner; and discover to us the nature and extent of the advantages derived to other nations, from this highly favoured people.

The distinguished honours conferred upon the Hebrews; their being selected and separated from a world immersed in ignorance and idolatry; their possessing, for a series of ages, many exclusive privileges;—their being represented in the language of scripture, as the peculiar people of God, have induced many Christians to entertain sentiments concerning that nation, which are not supported by historical facts; neither are they consistent with our ideas of the divine impartiality. Misconceptions also, respecting this subject, have inspired the descendants from the faithful Abraham, with extravagant conceptions of their own superiority. Such vain expectations have thus been fostered, as became an impediment to their receiving a Dispensation, for which that communicated to their ancestors was preparatory.

It is readily admitted that numerous passages in the Old Testament, and particularly in the prophecies, are expressive of an affectionate predilection. Jehovah is emphatically styled "the God of Israel; the God of Jacob." "The children of Jacob are his chosen ones." "I loved thee with an everlasting love." "How shall I give thee up Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee Israel?" Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compas-

sion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee." These, and many other expressions of a similar import, seem to testify a peculiar attachment to this people, notwithstanding those enormities of conduct which are so frequently and so severely reprehended. Hence do these expressions appear to be inconsistent with that impartiality which our reason ascribes to the universal parent, by giving to this people an exclusive title to the divine favour, which they deserved not. The subject demands consideration.

When we were treating of the nature of *Love*, in a preceding volume, we considered it both as a *principle* and an *affection*. It was observed that the *principle* of love, respects an invariable predilection for good, seated in the mind of a percipient, who knows, or thinks that he knows, in what good consists, and in what respects it relates to well-being. When the principle is directed towards any particular object it becomes an *affection;* that is, the mind is well disposed towards the object, or strongly affected by it. This affection, as it respects others, may again be distinguished into the love of *Benevolence*, and of *Complacency*. The *bene-*

volent affections may be extended to all sentient beings, whose susceptibility respecting good or evil is sufficient to excite them. True benevolence requires no other quality in the object, than his power of enjoyment, or exposure to sufferings. It may therefore be extended, not only to strangers, but to *enemies*, even to those whose *demerits* are great and conspicuous. It may sometimes be alarmed by the perception of the dangers to which a subject is exposed, *in consequence of his demerits*. In such cases its operations are exemplified by the affection of a wise and good parent, for a son who is precipitating himself into ruin, by the profligacy of his conduct: they are illustrated by the *philanthropist*, who consults the good of the most ignorant and depraved part of mankind; and they shine with peculiar lustre in the *merciful man*, who remits the punishment due to an offender, and forms plans for his welfare.

The case is very different in the love of *Complacency*. In this, some degree of *merit* is always presupposed. It can alone be excited by some kind of apparent *worth;* some real or supposed *excellence*. It rises or falls, augments or diminishes, according to obvious gradations in this scale.

The affection of Complacency may be much

perverted, and it will have its partialities in weak minds. But these partialities proceed from a conception that pleasing and amiable qualities exist in the beloved object, to a greater degree than justice will allow. The slightest appearance of worth will thus be magnified, while every fault will be concealed or palliated. Where truth and reason preside over the affection, this partial fondness cannot be indulged. The manifestations of complacency will accompany *real worth* alone. It will always be withdrawn from obvious demerit, although it may leave *Commiseration* to operate with the greater force.

There is, however, one mode of manifesting complacency, exclusive of any distinguished merit in the object, which seems at first view to oppose the above statement. Peculiar favour is frequently shown to individuals, *merely on account of their close connection with persons, whose conduct or character have obtained our warm approbation.* A liberal mind is disposed to confer peculiar marks of favour upon those who are destitute of every personal claim, in consequence alone of the complacent affections entertained for their relatives and connexions. This principle is not only implanted in our nature, but is highly respectable; although it is too often mis-

applied, through a total inattention to the particular object for which it was implanted. It has been frequently known, in human life, to confer exalted and permanent honours upon the *worthless*, simply because they had the advantage of being descended from *worthy* ancestors, to whom they were a *disgrace*; and upon descendants whose vicious courses may have been destructive of that good, which rendered their predecessors so worthy of complacential affection. By such mistakes, virtue and vice are strangely blended. The same rewards are given to the wicked as to the righteous; attempts are made literally to *impute* merit, and to transfer a worthy *character* to the *unworthy*, without changing their *natures*; which is to confound identities where there is no resemblance.

But the due application of this principle, is an exalted reward, and an encouragement to virtue.

The love of parents to their offspring is proximate to self-love; nay it is a *species* of self-love. It is the great object of good parents, through every stage of life, to promote the welfare of their progeny. For this they are often willing to sacrifice every personal enjoyment, and personal advantage. Nothing therefore can be more pleasing than the expectations, or per-

ceptions, that the honours which they have been assiduous to merit, should, to a certain degree, be reflected upon their offspring. Parental fondness will also cherish the expectation, that the respect shown to their children, will be an encouragement to imitate the example which obtained it; and the worthy offspring of such parents, will be ambitious to acquire a real title to that which has been bestowed by courtesy, instead of becoming proud and supercilious, sleeping upon their laurels, or sullying them in the dirt.

The supreme Being, who has placed this principle of complacential benevolence in our bosoms, himself acts upon it; and he has set us an example, in what manner it can be invariably acted upon for good. In all those instances upon record, where favours have been extended to those whose personal merits have not attracted them, we may perceive that this extension of kindness, sometimes consists in appointing the successor of his approved servants to the honourable station of being the *means, instruments,* or *mediums* of conveyance of some essensential good to others, in preference to the instrumentality of those whose *parents have not merited* this honourable distinction; sometimes *in acts of clemency* to the undeserving, that the

righteous may not be afflicted by their punishment. Thus it was that after the destruction of an irreclaimable race of men, the family of Noah was chosen to renovate the world; and to them was the opportunity conferred of disseminating those principles of righteousness, upon which its existence and welfare was to depend; for "Noah was a just man and perfect in his generation, and Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord." Thus would the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah have been spared from total destruction, out of respect to the character, and the compassionate feelings of Lot, had not their degeneracy been so universal. The exemplary piety of Abraham, amidst an idolatrous people, his ready obedience to the Divine commands, and submission to the severest trial to which an affectionate parent could be exposed, were peculiarly acceptable to God; and were remunerated by the peculiar privileges promised to his posterity. He had assurances that they should become a great nation; that they should finally possess the land of Canaan; and that "in him shall all the families of the earth be blessed." They were accordingly selected from a wicked and ignorant race of men, to be initiated in the principles of religion and virtue; to be a deposit of sacred truths, which were hidden from the rest

of the world; and to be the channel of communication of spiritual blessings to mankind.—While other nations continued in palpable darkness, the light of Divine truths shone around them: They had the first offer to become pious, moral, and happy, to a degree not to be obtained by natural means: They were promised the peculiar patronage and protection of heaven, upon the condition of their obedience to the commands of heaven, which they were enabled by a peculiar revelation to accomplish. Nor was there a single act of piety unrewarded, or mark of sincere contrition rejected.

Similar to these privileges, which were common to the whole nation of the Hebrews, we are presented with some other evidences, of the effects of Divine complacency being extended beyond the person of the agent. The distinguished virtue and piety of Joseph, procured to him the gratifying assurance, that his two sons, although born of an Egyptian woman, should participate in the honour of forming tribes in Israel. When Solomon encouraged idolatrous worship, although "the Lord was angry because his heart was turned from the Lord God of Israel;" and it was the determination of heaven to rend the kingdom;

yet the suspension of so great an evil was ascribed to the piety of his father David. "In thy days I will not do it for David thy father's sake, neither will I send away all thy kingdom, but will give one tribe to thy son, for David my servant's sake, and for Israel's sake whom I have chosen."

Thus far did distinguished and honourable advantages extend, by the influence of complacency, from those who possessed singular merit, to those who had no personal claim; but no further. The Jewish people were warned, from the earliest period, and through every stage of their political existence, that permanent prosperity, and permanent happiness, were alone to be the result of their personal qualifications. These were alone to be procured by the purity of their worship, and the strictness of their morals.—Accordingly, the whole of their history informs us, that they were rewarded or punished, enjoyed national honours, and suffered national disgrace, in a manner correspondent to the state of their religious and moral characters.

Favours thus conferred upon the descendants of those who were eminently pious and good, insulted no one; were an injury to no one. There was not a privation to any one of a single privilege or right, to which he was naturally entitled. The chief object of envy in their state, was the power of communicating blessings; and there

still remained, to the envious, the power of participation in these blessings. But a dreadful responsibility was attached to such distinctions. The disgrace of their impieties was in exact proportion to their superior advantages. A determination to shut the eyes, and not to walk in the light of heaven, implies much greater culpability, than to wander in the ignorance and darkness to which the surrounding nations were involuntarily subjected.

It was remarked, upon a former occasion, that the principle of *displacency* sometimes operates in a similar manner; that the human mind is prone to transfer, and, as it were, *impute* guilt, to the innocent, who are intimately allied to the supposed offender. But this principle is confined within very narrow bounds, and ought to be of a short duration in its influence. It is founded upon the assumption, that the dependants or relatives of aggressors, are virtually partakers in the offence: That they are the culpable parts of a culpable whole. It is inferred, that persons in these intimate connexions, possess the same spirit, approve of the same conduct, and are disposed to act in a similar manner. Nor are such apprehensions unfounded, as long as the only laws of society which are avowed, consist in an

inviolate attachment to a particular clan or party. The progress of civilization; greater freedom of intercourse; the diffusion of better principles; and the discovery that individuals are not always obstinate partizans in an unjust cause, gradually moderate the severity of these early maxims, and open a path for the exercise of clemency, and for the more accurate discriminations of justice.

When the intentional punishment of one man, or bodies of men, for the offences of others, shall no longer exist, there will still remain that kind of punishment for the offences of parents and ancestry, which proceeds from the natural influence of cause and effect. Advantages lost, or calamities induced by the folly of predecessors, will sometimes acquire a permanency, which it may not be in the power of subsequent wisdom speedily to remove. Degeneracy also propagates degeneracy; and, according to the usual process of things, will be productive of all those miseries which are the natural result of degeneracy.

Whoever admits the validity of the above observations, must admit that the numerous expressions of affectionate concern, uttered by the mouths of the prophets, in the name of their God; the frequent and earnest expostulations with this stubborn people, so far from being indications of personal *complacency*, are the strongest tokens

of *commiseration.* The Supreme Being, who, through the whole of his connexion with the Jewish people, is represented as being actuated by those passions and affections which influence the minds of human agents, in similar circumstances, manifests a *reluctance* to punish; expresses a *sorrow* at the very calamities he himself has inflicted; employs every argument, gives every encouragement, uses every menace, that they may repent, reform, and be happy. Instead of *seeing no sins in these his elect*, he manifests more solicitude on account of their sins, than for the depravity of the heathens. Their history shews that this solicitude, and these exertions, availed not to the due extent; as the privileges the Hebrews had enjoyed, in consequence of their being descended from faithful Abraham, were shamefully abused, the eminent piety of their ancestors did not protect them from the punishment which the abuse of their privileges finally deserved; and their punishment continued until their reformation commenced.

Were we to take a view of the moral character of this people, from their first selection, until the days of their captivity, we should perceive that one of the strongest marks of Divine complacency in the pious conduct of Abraham, consisted in the patience and long-suffering exer-

cised towards his offspring, from generation to generation: and we should be surprised, that so few among them were exemplary characters, notwithstanding the immense advantages of a religious and moral nature, which were communicated to all.

But this will be unnecessary, as our remarks concerning the moral character of the Jewish nation, previously to their captivity, are confirmed by the incessant, terrific, and yet ineffectual reprehensions of their prophets, through the different stages of their political existence. Isaiah takes the lead at a period when their depravity was not at its height. For he prophesied during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah; of whom Ahaz alone was profligate and abandoned. Yet we read the national character in his introductory exclamation; "Hear, Oh heavens, and give ear O earth; for the Lord hath spoken. I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me.—The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider. Oh sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil doers, children that are corruptors, they have forsaken the Lord; they have provoked the Holy One of Is-

rael to anger, they have gone away backward.—Why should ye be stricken any more? Ye will revolt more and more; the whole head is sick, and the whole heart is faint," &c. The passages to the same import, which might be quoted from this prophet and most of the others, are innumerable.

It might have been imagined, that a people who have received so many evidences of the divine interposition, who were surrounded with moral and religious privileges, who are mentioned in various parts of Scripture, with such warmth of affection, and to whom blessings were so copiously pronounced, would have been signalized for worldly prosperity; would have been a *happy* people. But this was not eminently the case. All the animating promises were conditional, and the conditions were never performed on their part, to a degree that rendered their prosperity permanent. "The Lord waited to be gracious," but very few opportunities presented themselves to manifest the richness of his goodness. The rule of the divine conduct is explicitly stated in the prophetic language of Jeremiah. "Behold as clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in my hand, O house of Israel.—If that nation against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I

thought to do unto them.—If it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then will I repent of the Good, wherewith I said I would benefit them."*

As their conduct strongly resembled that of the surrounding nations, so did their civil and political state. They had all the rest and peace they deserved; but these were unfrequent and of short duration, compared with the tumults and contests in which they were almost constantly engaged; but which they might, by their obedience, have effectually escaped. The imperfect manner in which they had executed the commands of Moses, exposed them equally to the seductions and the insults of the surrounding nations. The revolt of the ten tribes was followed by intestine wars. They were invaded, conquered, and plundered, by the superior powers of Assyria, Chaldea, and Egypt. After four hundred years of severe bondage, the periods which were strongly characterized by national prosperity were extremely few. While they were under the government of Joshua, and of the Elders who immediately succeeded him, and in the earlier times of the Judges, they enjoyed national blessings to a great degree. But it is

* Jer. ch. xviii. v. 6—10.

mentioned as a singularity that, after the death of Sisera, "the land had rest forty years." Under David they acquired an honourable character among the nations; and were indulged in that gratification of the ambitious, the pride of conquest. During the reign of Solomon, they exulted in their national splendour. Exclusive of these short epochs, they seem to have been nearly upon a level with the neighbouring nations. They were alternately elevated and depressed, triumphant and subdued. They were sometimes envied, and sometimes envying; which occasionally induced them to worship the gods of the Pagans, that they might enjoy the temporal blessings the Pagans occasionally possessed.

Will not the above observations clearly elucidate the nature and extent of the distinguished favour, which was conferred upon the descendants of Abraham? Although they neglected to profit by the superior light and knowledge they enjoyed, respecting those important articles, the nature of true religion, and of acceptable service, yet they were destined to possess the high honour of being the deposit of these principles, for the benefit of others. Whenever any Superior proposes to execute a wise and

beneficent plan, requiring the agency of his dependants, although no individuals among them may be *entitled* to the preference, yet it must be enjoyed by *some*. Individuals must be selected to the honour of becoming instrumental to the general good. In such cases, we cannot conceive of a mode by which the necessary inequality can be produced, less offensive to others, or more operative upon the minds of all, than to render the superior virtues of parents or progenitors the motives of choice. This manifests a *marked respect for merit*, which all must approve, and by which numbers may be encouraged. But the post of honour is also the post of danger. The man who is placed in a distinguished station, has a character to acquire and to maintain. Responsibility is attached to his office; for he has duties to perform which are not expected from others. Marks of complacency cannot be conferred upon him in his new character, by a wise director, until he *deserve* them; and if he fail, he incurs severe displeasure, notwithstanding the virtues of his ancestry. The conduct of the Israelites, as a people, could have no claim to approbation, notwithstanding their superior advantages. They were frequently the objects of divine indignation. The only indulgence shewn, on account

of their patriarchal ancestors, consisted in a manifest reluctance to punish, and in the encouraging assurances given them, that upon reformation, they should return to the immediate protection of heaven.

The dispersion and subsequent annihilation, as a people, of not less than *ten tribes* of the house of Jacob, illustrate and confirm these assertions. Had the chosen nation been the personal favourites of the Almighty, in the manner that had been generally supposed, his watchful eye would have prevented their foul disgrace. These tribes were in fact the bulk of the nation. The two remaining tribes could not have been sufficiently numerous, for the accomplishment of the promises made to the patriarchs, if a *personal predilection* for their numerous progeny, had been the primary object. These promises were fully accomplished by the exclusive privileges which their descendants had enjoyed, for a series of ages: but when their privileges were abused, to the subversion of the religion they were bound to protect; when they became as profligate as the Antediluvians, as the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, or as the Canaanites, whose lands they occupied, without attention to the conditions of the tenure, they were also swept away as abandoned and incorrigible.

Miraculous interpositions were destined to higher objects than to the protection of favourites, who were not to be reclaimed by the usual dispensations of Providence. The remaining tribes, notwithstanding their degeneracies, were much less vicious, and were still corrigible; and, notwithstanding the comparative paucity of their numbers, they were competent to all the purposes of Jehovah; consequently they, and they alone, of the numerous tribes of Israel, were appointed to bring these purposes to the intended issue. A similar dispersion of these must have left the plan unaccomplished. They were therefore miraculously prevented from being dissolved as a nation, punished with the severity which their sins required, regenerated by their afflictions, and then restored to the land of their fathers.

Let the above statement correct those vague and indiscriminating ideas which have been formed, concerning the love of God to his chosen people the Israelites; by which some minds have been greatly embarrassed; and others have been induced to palliate flagrant immoralities, as if any among them had a prescriptive right to act as they pleased, without the charge of cul-

pability. Such sentiments are most dishonourable to God, and totally inconsistent with those principles of morality he incessantly commands us to cherish.

SECT. II.

EXPRESS DECLARATIONS RESPECTING THE DIFFUSION OF HAPPINESS, THROUGH THE MEDIUM OF THIS DISPENSATION.

We have shewn, from every part of the Jewish history, that the grand object was to *destroy idolatry*, which is so fatal to human happiness, and to establish among a particular people the important doctrines of *Monotheism*, or the existence of one God, the great creator and sovereign ruler, without rival or competitor, possessing every natural and every moral attribute.—We have shewn, from the very nature of rational religion, or of such sentiments concerning religion as are most consonant to our reason, that human happiness cannot be ensured in any other way, than by submitting to their influence.—We have also shewn that these very sentiments of the Deity, and his moral relations, are uniformly inculcated in the Jewish dispensation; that the practice of every moral virtue is

founded upon them, and represented as being essentially necessary to obtain the favour of God, or to enjoy that happiness of which our nature is rendered capable.

But we are not to suppose that to destroy idolatrous worship, and to establish, after the lapse of many centuries, sublimer principles of religion, among a small remnant of a particular people, was the ultimate purpose of God. The beneficial effects of this change would be too circumscribed, and too disproportionate to the length of time and complicated means employed, and to the numerous obstacles surmounted. The result of these unwearied exertions, would have been of small importance, were it not preparatory for other blessings, for the enjoyment of which religious ignorance was a total disqualification. The sacred history, which has informed us of so many important facts, informs us also that higher purposes are to be answered; —that a much more extensive good is in reserve for mankind at large, through the medium established, and the progressive operation of the means pre-ordained;—that the whole human race shall be rendered partakers of signal blessings;—and that the descendants of Abraham shall finally become the objects of the divine

complacency, by their possessing a character which deserves it.

Although the transgression of Adam, disqualified him for the immediate possession of immortality, and deprived him of the honour of being the parent of an immortal race, yet he was not left in his humiliated state, destitute of consolation. Whatever we are to understand by the Serpent, and the sentence pronounced, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel;" it is universally acknowledged that these expressions were intended to convey the consolatory promise, that finally a victory shall be obtained, greatly superior to the partial evils induced by a compliance with the temptation; and that this final success respects the posterity of Adam as one great family. Nor can it be applied to any one particular people exclusively.

The promise pronounced to Abraham, several ages afterwards, was full and explicit. "I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing; and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse them that curse thee; *and in thee*

shall all the families of the earth be blessed." After Abraham had testified his readiness to obey the severe command, the Angel of the Lord said unto him, " now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me." He repeated the blessing and assigned the reason, " because thou hast obeyed my voice." The same promise was repeated to Isaac, during the season of a desolating famine ; and the obedience of Abraham is alleged as the cause. It was also confirmed to Jacob, as he was on his way to Padanaram.

Among the predictions which were uttered by this patriarch in his last hours, the assurance that " the sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come, and unto him shall the gathering of the people be,"* is the most remarkable. It is not consistent with our design to state the different opinions of commentators upon this passage, much less to decide between them ; but to point out a fact in which they must all concur. We learn from the Jewish history, that after the revolt of the ten tribes, the tribe of Judah was the *principal,* and upon the return of the Israelites from captivity, it was the *only tribe* that was recognized ; the individuals of the other

* Gen. ch. xlix. v. 10.

tribes, being blended, and as it were absorbed by it. The descendants from this tribe remain to the present day a distinct people, perfectly insulated from all others among whom they are resident. Thus they are under a theocratic government to the present hour, so far as to be preserved from intermixing with the nations among whom they are scattered, and so as not to lose the characteristics of a foreign people; which has been universally the case with all other strangers, however opposite their primitive characters and customs may have been. Their original propensity to conform to the most impious and absurd customs of the nations, with whom they had intercourse, now yields to insuperable aversions and prejudices, in things apparently indifferent. Wherever there is a professed Jew, there is a strict observer of the mosaic law. This fact is consonant with the expression, *nor a lawgiver from between his feet;* which cannot refer to a succession of legislators enacting new laws, for such could not be the laws of God, but of superintendants who should preserve the law entire, until the *Shiloh* come. Concerning the precise meaning of the word Shiloh, commentators are not agreed; but they are agreed that the character and qualifications it is supposed to express, belong to a divine personage,

under whose government all the nations of the earth shall finally be assembled.

Moses, in giving directions concerning the Priests and the Levites, admonishes them, when they should come to the land which the Lord had given them, not to learn to do after the abomination of those nations, nor in any instance to listen to deceivers ; and he adds, " the Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thy brethren, like unto me, unto him shall ye hearken." Some divines have considered this passage as predictive of the advent of the great prophet, who shall more fully instruct his people in the counsels of the Most High. Others think that the context necessarily confines it to Joshua the prophet, who should immediately succeed him, or to the order of prophets raised up in his place to instruct the people, in whatever related to their religious concerns. Notwithstanding therefore its apparent relation to our subject, we shall not venture to apply it.

Numerous are the passages in the prophecies of Isaiah, and other succeeding prophets, which confirm the above assurances. We need not subjoin, that the completion of various events predicted by them are vouchers of the future accomplishments. " It shall come to pass," says Isaiah, " that the mountain of the

Lord's house be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills, and *all nations shall flow unto it.*"* The same prophet, anticipating the future, as if the event had already taken place, declares, " the people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined."† " The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."‡ " In that day there shall be a root in Jesse which shall stand as an ensign of the people; to *it shall all the Gentiles seek.*"§ " He shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles;—the isles shall wait for his law," &c.‖ " Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth."¶ " The Gentile shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising."** " I am sought of them that asked not for me, I am found of them that sought me not. I said, behold me, behold me, to a nation that was not called by my name."††

The extent of blessings in reserve for those

* Isa. ch. ii. v. 2.
† Isa. ch. ix. v. 2, 3.
‡ Isa. ch. xi. v. 9.
§ Isaiah ch. xi. v. 11
‖ Isa. ch. xlii. from v. 1 to 12.
¶ Isa. ch. xlv. v. 22.
** Isa. ch. lx. v. 1 to 11.
†† Isa. ch. xlv. v. 1.

who are not of the house of Israel, is beautifully represented by Ezekiel, under the image of a goodly cedar, under whose wide-spreading branches shall dwell all fowl of every wing.*

The prophecies of Daniel respecting distant ages, are expressed in obscure and mystical language. There is however one passage sufficiently explicit for our purpose. "I saw in the night visions, and behold, one like the Son of Man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought him near before him; and there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, *that all people, nations, and languages should serve him.* His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom which shall not be destroyed."

We are moreover made acquainted with the *nature* of this blessing. It will consist in the universal and cordial admission of all those principles, and in the cultivation of all those affections, which we have proved, from the *nature of man*, to be essential to his well-being. Principles and dispositions that shall subdue the ignorance, immoralities, and impieties which have deluged the world, and introduce universal

* Ezek. ch. xvii. v. 22, 23.

peace, prosperity, and social happiness. In other words, the love of virtue, implicit obedience to the laws of moral obligation, and the consolations of rational religion, shall prevail.

We are also informed that this new and desirable æra is to be introduced by a distinguished personage, in whom are centered the sublimest virtues; in whom will be united superior dignity and elevation of character, with a state of humiliation and personal sufferings. To this state of things is there a partial reference in the passages already quoted. In other passages, all the circumstances which are so conducive to universal felicity, are, according to the impetuosity of prophetic language, collected together in one glorious assemblage. "There shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots, and the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord; and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears," "but with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity, for the meek of the earth; and he shall smite the earth,"—not with a *sword*,—but "with

the *rod of his mouth*, and *with the breath of his lips* shall he slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins." The subjugation of all the turbulent passions, which have always diffused misery proportionate to their prevalence, while they degrade rational man to a level with the most noxious animals; and the delightful harmony that shall result from mutual good-will, are beautifully described by those striking metaphors, " The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf, and the young lion, and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them; and the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox, and the suckling shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice's den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea."* Human ingenuity shall no longer be exercised to invent instruments of destruction, to be admired in proportion as they become tremendous, but to discover, multiply, and diffuse the means

* Is. ch. xi. v. 1, 9.

of good, and the blessings of peace. "They shall beat their swords into plough-shares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; for nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."* Unto us a "child is born," says the same prophet, "unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulders, and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end." &c.† The meekness of his character is thus represented: "He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench. He shall not fail, nor be discouraged, until he have set judgment in the earth, and the isles shall wait for his law."‡ His humiliation is thus described: "He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrow, and acquainted with grief." "He was oppressed and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a

* Is. ch. ii. v. 4. † Is. ch. ix. v. 6. ‡ Is. ch. xlii. v. 2, 4.

sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth," &c.* Yet "the spirit of God is upon him; the Lord hath anointed him to preach good tidings unto the meek; to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound."†

This great personage is further represented under a character which denotes firmness and permanency as a *foundation*, and as a *chief corner stone* of the new edifice which is to be erected; that everlasting temple of universal holiness and felicity. "Behold, saith the Lord God, I lay in Zion for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation.—Judgment will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet."‡

From the above epitome of the moral and religious history of the ancient Hebrews, united with these prophetic declarations, it is manifest that, in consequence of the separation of this people from every other nation, and the peculiar dispensations of providence respecting them, by

* Isa. ch. liii. v. 2, 7. † Isa. ch. lxi. v. 1, 2.
‡ Isa. ch. xxviii. v. 16.

their instrumentality, and through their medium, a preparation is made for the general welfare of mankind, by the gradual progress of knowlege, virtue, and piety, which are so essential to human happiness. The works of righteousness can alone be productive of peace, and the effects of righteousness be quietness and assurance for ever.

Yet these people are not destined to be the medium of important blessings to others, from which they shall be totally excluded. Their impieties have opened a way for the communication of those blessings to the Gentiles, which they had despised. But the same prophecies give them the encouraging assurance, that they shall finally become partakers of them. Their continuing firm in the profession of Monotheism, and their scrupulous renunciation of those idolatrous customs, to which they had formerly been so prone, were not sufficient to secure a perpetuity of the divine favour. They were but as means for more important ends. These people were still destitute of purity of morals, and genuine devotion, which alone could render them a consolation to each other, and secure the favour of heaven. Their religious habits degenerated into cold, uninfluential ceremonies, which in place of forming the minds to the habits of

virtue, became substitutes for them. Their prophets, in primitive times, frequently complained of their approaching to God with their lips, while their hearts were far from him; and the great Prophet afterwards reproached them with being scrupulously exact in the payment of the tythe of mint, annise, and cummin, while they neglected the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faithfulness. But as they have, by the severe dispensations of providence, been cured of idolatry, they are now under a discipline which will correct their remaining depravities. When these important purposes are accomplished, he that scattered Israel "will gather them, and keep them as a shepherd doth his flock." Many declarations of this kind are so intermixed with the prophecies relative to their return from the Babylonish captivity, that it may be difficult to distinguish them; but others possess characteristic marks which cannot be mistaken; for they refer to a state of religion and morality, which has hitherto been unknown. "Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah; not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers, in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt;

which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband to them, saith the Lord; but this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel. After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, know the Lord; for they shall all know me; from the least of them unto the greatest of them; for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."*

SECT. III.

ON THE NATURAL AND MORAL INFLUENCE OF THE JEWISH RELIGION, IN MITIGATING THE HORRORS OF PAGANISM.

It would manifest great ignorance of the nature of man, and of the power which habits, prejudices, and predilections have upon his mind, to expect that the nations who were deeply immersed in barbarism and idolatry, who had de-

* Jerem. ch. xxxi. v. 31—34. See also Jer. ch. l. v. 20. Ezek. ch. xxxiv. v. 11, passim. Ezek. ch. xxxvii. v. 21—28.

rived principles from their ancestors which were deemed sacred during successive generations, should, without a divine impulse upon every individual mind, renounce immediately all their gods, and all their superstitious rites, upon their becoming acquainted with invaders who professed a purer and more sublime religion. The utmost that could at first be expected must be a perception that the God of the Israelites was greatly *superior* to the deities whom they served. They would first learn to *fear his matchless power;* to wonder at the great things done for this strange people; and to acknowledge that this people must be happy under such a protector. These impressions would prepare the way for others, which had a tendency to mitigate the horrors of a religion which their habits would not permit them to relinquish entirely, and render them less tenacious of its most profligate rites.

Such effects, which it was natural to expect, were produced to a considerable extent.

A multiplicity of Gods was essential to paganism. Most of these Gods were considered as the tutelar deities of particular kingdoms, provinces, minuter districts, and as agents in all the personal concerns of individuals. This very multiplicity generally rendered the Pagans

tolerant, and upon great occasions they readily adopted the gods of their neighbours, or of their enemies, of whose patronage they had formed an exalted opinion. But the long captivity of the Hebrews, and the insulting hardships to which they were continually exposed, could not inspire these Egyptians with a favourable opinion of the God of Israel. As the Hebrews were suffered to remain in a state of the most abject penitence, for so many centuries, the Egyptians would be disposed to infer, that their Jehovah was impotent to save them from the hands of masters, who were under the protection of more potent deities. Contrary to the usual custom of paganism, this people were so far intolerant, that they would not permit their slaves to exercise the public solemnities of worship. When Pharaoh was induced, by terror, to grant them the indulgence of public sacrifices in the land, the answer of Moses discovers to us the severity of their restrictions. "Shall we sacrifice the abominations of the Egyptians before their eyes, and will they not stone us?" The severity may be ascribed to the veneration in which those animals were held, which constituted the most solemn sacrifice of the Israelites; but it manifested the greatness of Pharaoh's panic in being willing to grant an indulgence in a ritual which insulted the divinities of Egypt.

The numerous and distressing miracles which Jehovah wrought for the liberation of his people, finally convinced them of their mistake concerning the impotency of Jehovah. Contempt gave way to astonishment and despair. The reiteration of the most dreadful calamities proved to this superstitious nation, that the God of their slaves was no creature of the imagination; that his existence was real; and that he possessed a power far beyond that which they could ascribe to their fictitious Deities. The three trifling imitations of his magicians might at first suggest to the sovereign, that his gods were at least equal in power.

Yet the triumphs of Jehovah were finally complete, although the tyrant was deeply interested in the detention of so large a number of laborious subjects, and used every evasion to prevent their being rescued from his arm. The magicians owned that the miracles which they could not imitate were wrought by a more powerful God. Many of the people believed in his judgments, and listening to the advice of Moses, when he predicted a tremendous storm of hail and rain, preserved their property from destruction: and Pharaoh himself, who at an early

interview with the servant of God, haughtily demands who is Jehovah that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not Jehovah, neither will I let Israel go," was finally compelled to intreat that Moses would intercede in his behalf, and to implore the blessing of the God whom he had defied. "Begone, and bless me also."

But the greatness and extent of the impression made upon the community at large is manifest from the "mixed multitude" which accompanied the Hebrews in their flight. We may suppose this multitude to consist of Egyptians, and of Ethiopians, and other sojourners in the Land, who were so deeply convinced of the superior power of the God whom the Hebrews worshipped, that they willingly relinquished every thing which could have endeared to them their native or adopted country, in order to place themselves under his protection, and share in the destiny of this highly-favoured people. They were doubtless instrumental in preparing the way of the Lord, by bearing testimony to the wonders wrought in Egypt, and proving to all the nations, with whom they had intercourse, that the reports concerning the miraculous escape of the Israelites, were neither invented, nor exaggerated. We are informed by their leader, Moses, that one

object in miraculously preserving the Israelites from the avenging pursuit of Pharaoh, was that the Egyptians might be more fully convinced of the power of Jehovah, and the certainty of his protecting those who confided in him. "I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians, and they shall follow them, and I will get me honour upon Pharaoh, and upon all his hosts, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen; *and the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord,* when I have gotten my honour upon Pharaoh, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen."

When Jethro, the idolatrous priest of Midian, heard "all that the Lord had done unto Pharaoh, and to the Egyptians, for Israel's sake, he blessed the God of Israel, saying, "*now I know that Jehovah is greater than all gods,* for in the things wherein they dealt proudly he was above them." His education and his profession naturally induced him to believe in the existence and influence of other gods, but the wonders of which he was informed compelled him to acknowledge their inferiority.

Moses expected that these wonders, wrought for the chosen people, would make a deep impression upon the heathens. This is obvious from the tenour of his expostulation with God, when the people had provoked his wrath by

murmuring at the discouraging report of the spies, and God threatened "I will smite them with pestilence, and disinherit them, and I will make of thee a greater nation, and mightier than they." This zealous and disinterested chief said unto the Lord, "then the Egyptians shall hear it, and they shall tell it to the inhabitants of this land, for they have heard that thou Lord art among this people, and now if thou shalt kill all this people as one man, *then the nations which have heard the fame of thee will speak, saying, because the Lord was not able to bring this people into the land which he sware unto them, therefore he hath slain them in the wilderness.*"*

The dread and consternation of the Moabites, when the children of Israel approached their borders, was manifested by the expedient used by Balak their king; who, to revive their drooping courage, was induced to bribe one of his prophets to curse "this company that lick-eth up all that is round about us, as the ox lick-eth up the grass of the field." The failure of the attempt, the blessings pronounced by the mouth of Balaam upon this people, and his de-claring "there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither any divination against Israel, the Lord his God is with him, and the shout of a

* Numb. ch. xiv. v. 12. 16.

king is among them," must have greatly increased the terror of the Moabites.

We are also informed, that "when the kings of the Amorites, who were on the western side of Jordan, and all the Canaanites who were by the sea, had heard that the Lord had dried up the waters of Jordan, from before the children of Israel, that their hearts melted, neither was their spirit within them any more." These were wonders which no one had ever ascribed to the heathen deities; and from which, as they could not avoid acknowledging, their gods were unable to save them.

During the siege of Jericho, Rhahab the harlot was induced to conceal the spies sent by Joshua, from a conviction that his people were protected by the irresistible power of their God; "and she said unto the men, I know that the Lord has given you the land, and that your terror has fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you: for we have heard how the Lord dried up the waters of the red sea for you, when you came out of Egypt, &c.—and as soon as we had heard these things our hearts did melt, neither did there remain any more courage in any man, because of you, *for the Lord your God he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath.*" This was a proof that they did

not consider him as a mere local deity, similar to the gods whom they served; and it prepared them for a confession that the Jehovah of Israel was the Lord of Lords, and the God of Gods.

The singular artifice used by the Gibeonites to form a league with the princes of Judah, although it was by the sacrifice of their liberty, evinced a conviction that the God of these strangers possessed "irresistible power." From a very far country thy servants are come, *because of the name of the Lord thy God*, for we have heard of the fame of him, and all that he did in Egypt, &c. &c.

The triumphs of David over the gigantic champion of the Philistines, who had proclaimed defiance to all the hosts of Israel, was considered as the triumph of Jehovah, over an enemy who had defied the armies of the living God, by the instrumentality of a youth who appeared so unequal to the combat. Nor would the impressions made upon the minds of the Philistines be effaced by the subsequent accident which befel Dagon their God, whom they found prostrate and mutilated on the threshold of the temple, before the ark of the Lord. Their superstitious terror upon this event was so great, that neither priest nor people dared to tread upon the threshold, for a series of years.

The rapid conquests of Joshua, and the still

more splendid and extensive victories of David, during his protracted reign, must have manifested to the conquered nations the superiority of the God of Israel over the deities whom they feared; and although their ignorance, inveterate habits of idolatry, and attachments to its obscene and lascivious rites, would prevent their becoming proselytes to the Jewish religion, they were compelled to acknowledge that the God of this people was the *Lord God Almighty*; the *Lord of Hosts, and terrible in battle.* This would teach them to revere his power, which is the first object of reverence, and is the most prevalent in uncultivated minds.

When Benhadad, the king of Syria, besieged Samaria, in the days of Ahab, exulting in the superiority of his numbers, he threatened their total destruction. "The gods do so unto me, and more also, if the dust of Samaria shall suffice for handfuls for all the people that follow me." "And behold, there came a prophet unto Ahab, king of Israel, saying, thus saith the Lord, hast thou seen all this great multitude? Behold I will deliver it into thine hand this day, *and thou shalt know that I am the Lord.*" The signal victory obtained by the Israelites, struck their adversaries with awe. They ascribed it to the peculiar aid of their God; but they were disposed to consider him as a local deity. "The

servants of the king of Syria said their Gods are *Gods of the hills,* therefore they were stronger than we; but let us fight against them in the *plain,* and surely we shall be stronger than they. And there came a man of God and spake unto the king of Israel, and said; thus saith the Lord, because the Syrians have said the Lord is God of the hills, but he is not God of the valleys, therefore will I deliver all this great multitude into thine hand, *and ye shall know that I am the Lord.*"

In the above interesting narrative we perceive the extreme reluctance with which pre-conceived opinions, however erroneous and absurd, are relinquished; the power of the Almighty to subdue them: and the objects for which such extraordinary occurrences were ordained to take place; *that men might learn to know the Lord.*

The Pagans not only attributed national calamities, and personal afflictions, to the anger of their gods, but they ascribe *national prosperity* to their peculiar favour. The concerns of this life occupying every attention, these became the sole criterions of good and evil, and constituted the sole motives of worship. Acting upon these principles, they frequently forsook

the deities they were bound to serve, and adopted those of their enemies, who were more victorious, or in greater prosperity than themselves. This could be done without any violence being committed upon their ancient habits and rites of worship; for these were universally similar in their nature. Power being the primary attribute of their attention, they eagerly followed its manifestations. The experienced imbecility of their own gods weakened their attachments, and induced a preference of those who seemed to be more able to protect them.

It will appear, from a close attention to sacred history, that the remarkable splendour which distinguished the reign of Solomon, was permitted and appointed, not solely to indulge this select people with the objects most congenial with human ambition, but to convince surrounding nations, that the God of the Hebrews was the God of Peace, and of *national prosperity*, as well as the Lord mighty in battle."

During the whole of this sovereign's reign, the Jewish nation was advanced to the summit of worldly grandeur, and worldly happiness. The dominions of the Israelites were very extensive, and they lived in peace and amity with

all foreign powers. Solomon made an affinity with the king of those very Egyptians whose ancestors were their rigid oppressors; and he took the king's daughter in marriage. When we read of his *forty thousand* horses for his chariots, and his *twelve thousand horsemen*, we may be assured that this extraordinary state of the sovereign, would answer a much more important purpose than to gratify personal, or national vanity. It would attract the admiration, and awaken a salutary jealousy in the breasts of the Heathens, respecting the peculiar patronage conferred by the Supreme Ruler, upon this highly-favoured people. We are informed that the wisdom of Solomon exceeded all the wisdom of the east, and all the wisdom of Egypt; and we are informed also, "that his fame was in all nations round about;" and we know that his superior abilities were ascribed to the inspiration of his God.

It appears, from the instances upon record, that the wisdom of Solomon, during the earlier part of his reign, was of the popular kind; and in his advanced years, it was manifested by the judicious and moral reflections which the recollection of his own follies, in suffering so superior a mind to be corrupted by worldly pleasures, had inspired. By these he inculcated

principles which might become an antidote to the contagion of his example; and leave the important lesson to his people, and to the world, that the highest sublunary enjoyment is but vanity; and that the *whole of man* is to fear God, and keep his commandments.

We are informed that "Hiram, the Pagan king of Tyre, loved David." He had liberally proposed to give him every assistance which the cedars of Lebanon, cunning workmen, and his maritime situation would afford, to promote the design of David, in building a house for the Lord. This aid was afterwards given to his son Solomon, in the most cordial and effectual manner. When he learned from Solomon the terms upon which his proposals would be received, "he rejoiced greatly, and said, blessed be the Lord, this day, who hath given unto David a wise son over this great people." Hiram also assisted Solomon in his plan of forming a large navy of merchantmen; "sending his servants, shipmen that had knowledge of the sea, with the servants of Solomon." In consequence of such aids Judea became a large maritime state, under the reign of Solomon. The king was also enabled to supply himself with the richest ornaments for the house of the Lord, "bring-

ing gold from Ophir, almond trees, and precious stones."

Nothing could strike the Heathen nations with deeper awe and reverence for the religion of the Hebrews, than the building, decorations, and sacred services of the Temple at Jerusalem. A people who, in the days of their bondage, were condemned to worship their God in privacy, now attracted universal notice, and were become the admiration of the world, for the extraordinary splendour of their public Devotion. Every attention was paid in its construction, to the grand objects for which this temple was piously erected. The utmost skill in architecture was exerted, and an exuberance of the most costly ornaments was displayed. While the pomp and solemnity of their public sacrifices, particularly at the season of its dedication, were grand beyond example, and beyond description. These, which the Apostle justly calls *carnal ordinances,* because they were calculated to make an impression upon a race whose untutored and unreflecting minds required the aid of sensible objects, had a moral influence, both upon the Jewish people themselves,

and upon all those who had an intercourse with them."

Solomon in his sublime and reverential dedication of this temple to the true God, earnestly supplicates that when the people shall pray towards this place, in all their distresses, and in all their sinful aberrations, they may receive assistance and pardon. He adds, "moreover, concerning a stranger that is not of thy people Israel, but *cometh out of a far country, for thy name-sake, (for they shall hear of thy great name and of thy strong hand, and of thy stretched out arm,)* when he shall come and pray towards this house, hear thou in heaven, thy dwelling place, and do according to all that the stranger calleth to thee for, *that all people of the earth may know thy name, to fear thee as do thy people Israel, that they may know that this house which I have built, is called by thy name.**

Thus we learn that there was a much more important object in view, by the exhibition of these instances of prosperity and splendour, than merely to excite empty admiration. It was to impress upon the minds of the heathen world, a solemn sense of the majesty of the king of heaven, and of the blessings he was

* 1 Kings ch. viii.

able to communicate to his faithful worshippers.

The expectations of Solomon that strangers would do more than gaze and wonder; that they would also come and worship before the Lord of Lords, were realized. The extraordinary visit paid to Solomon by the queen of Sheba, demonstrates that, not only the fame of this sovereign, but a reverence for his God, was spread to distant lands. "And she said unto the king, it was a true report that I heard in my own land of thy acts and of thy wisdom. Howbeit, I believed not the words until I came, and mine eyes had seen it; and behold the half was not told me; thy wisdom and prosperity exceedeth the fame which I heard. Happy are thy men; happy are these thy servants, which stand continually before thee, and that hear thy wisdom. *Blessed be the Lord thy God which delighteth in thee to set thee on the throne of Israel; because the Lord loved Israel for ever, therefore made he thee king to do judgment and justice.*"

We might enlarge also upon the moral effects produced by the sacred music which was so much cultivated in the days of David and So-

lomon; and place in contrast those songs of praise and thanksgiving, which were chaunted to the honour of the God of Israel, accompanied by the cymbol, the sacbut, and the harp, with the harsh and discordant notes, by which savage nations make their earlier attempts at harmony. We might enlarge upon the horrid noise of rude instruments, and the loud acclamations of the multitude which accompanied their execrable rites, when they offered human sacrifices to Moloch, by which they attempted to silence the groans of the victims, and the shrieks of relatives and friends, who were making their last unavailing appeal to human feelings. We might compare these with the sublime choruses of Priests and Levites, singing with melodious voices, "Praise ye the Lord; O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever. It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto thy name, O most high; to show forth thy loving kindness in the morning, and thy faithfulness every night. Upon an instrument of ten strings, and upon the harp with solemn sound: for thou, O Lord, hast made me glad through thy work: I will triumph in the work of thine hands." Must not that heart be more than savage, which could be a frequent witness to such edifying and solacing offices of

devotion, without being, in some degree, affected and humanized?

The Jews had at this period very extensive commerce. It is generally supposed, that they traded to Judea, as well as to Arabia and Persia, and the more neighbouring districts. Although the situation of the land of Ophir, which furnished almond trees, gold, and precious stones in great abundance, is not precisely known, it must have been at a remote distance from India. This is obvious from the present uncertainty of its situation, and from the length of the voyage to it. For we are informed that the king had at sea a navy of Tarshish; "with the navy of Hiram, once in three years, came the navy of Tarshish, bringing gold and silver, ivory, and apes and peacocks."*

The introduction of extensive commerce at this period, not only presents us with another evidence of national prosperity, but it became the means of promoting civilization among the ruder nations; and thus were the Israelites highly honoured, by being rendered the instruments of good to different parts of the known world.

We have already had occasion to animadvert

* See Note M.

upon the beneficial effects of commerce, in subduing what may be termed, the insulated selfishness of individuals, and of clans, or separate bodies of men, so predominant in the earlier stages of society. When there is not some cause of attraction in the human species, we generally perceive a considerable degree of repulsions. A stranger, and an enemy, are almost synonymous in the conceptions of uncivilized barbarians. But whenever essential benefits are received, or expected, by a mutual intercourse, the most inveterate prejudices will gradually subside, and those who were once regarded with displeasure, or distrust, will become the objects of confidence and esteem. This state of mind is the harbinger of many virtues, personal and social.

The commerce began under the reign of David, was augmented by Solomon to a surprising extent; and it may be considered as forming a new and important æra in the history of the world. Although credit once obtained may be subsequently abused by men destitute of principle, yet commerce can alone be *introduced* by integrity of conduct, inspiring confidence, respect, complacency, and good will. The habitual perception of moral conduct, in a more civilized nation, may inspire

shame; and by awakening attention to the grosser irregularities, which custom had rendered universal, gradually introduce a reform.

We have amply enlarged upon the strict morality pervading the Jewish laws; and whoever compares these laws with the maxims and habits of surrounding nations, must consider them as a vivid light shining in a place of palpable darkness. What could be expected from those whose religion itself was immoral? Who were devoid of every other security against acts of injustice, than the instinctive affections of kindred, and the interested attachments of clans and parties, which prompted to acts of violence or deceit, towards those who were considered as Aliens. In opposition to these narrow principles, it was commanded, "if a stranger sojourn with thee, in your land, ye shall not vex him; but the stranger that dwelleth with you, shall be unto you as one born among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself." Instead of cherishing the desire to retaliate, according to the common maxims of the world, their own experience of the severities they had suffered in Egypt, was placed before them as a motive to a contrary conduct, "for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt, I am the Lord your God. Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment, in

mete-yard, in weight, or in measure. Just balances, just weights, and just ephah, and a just hin shall ye have. I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt." They were perpetually reminded of these laws, by the royal psalmist David, who declared " a false balance, lying lips, and the sacrifices of the wicked, are an abomination to the Lord;" and the splendid Solomon, who had raised their national grandeur to its height, frequently inculcates the same doctrine. Such maxims, enforced by such authorities, laid the proper foundation for a commercial intercourse with all the nations in the world ; and by it, would its inhabitants gradually learn righteousness also.

Thus, if we admit that the Jewish people took the lead in traffick, and that social intercourse, by traffick, has a direct tendency to humanize the breast, and soften the asperities of character, so obvious in barbarous nations, we must also admit that this highly-favoured people were rendered a blessing to mankind, at this season of their prosperity, by civilizing the nations with whom they had commercial intercourse.

Such a combination of advantageous circumstances must have had a favourable, although a gradual influence; removing Pagan ignorance,

and correcting the primitive savageness of their manners. The horrors of human sacrifices would be less frequent, and their lascivious rites less popular. It cannot be imagined that the contemplation, though at a distance, of a religion so pure in its principles, so dignified in its object, and so impressive in its rituals, should be totally without effect. If numberless Jews, seduced by their carnal propensities, or by a distrust of the God whom their fathers had served, imitated the example of their Pagan neighbours, until they apostatized from Jehovah, we may also conclude that the more attentive and considerate of the Pagans would adopt some of the maxims of the Israelites, and place them under the principles, and the rituals of their own worship. The clearest stream, by flowing over an impure surface, will become contaminated; but a bed of pure materials will in some degree filter and refine the most turbid fluids.

It was a principle in paganism to admit of an intercommunity of Gods. This principle was adopted by the Israelites to their destruction; for it both induced them to worship the idols of the heathens, and to corrupt the worship of the true God, by the incantations and superstitious rites of those idolaters; until they finally be-

came embarrassed in their minds, to which of the tutelar deities they belonged; and whom it was their interest to serve. But divine wisdom rendered perverseness of conduct subservient to the cause of Jehovah in the Pagan world. A minute attention to many incidental circumstances in the Jewish history will evince, that a miraculous interference sometimes took place, in order to restrain the imitative and accommodating dispositions of the chosen people, or to render it instrumental in spreading the knowledge of true religion among the heathens. An example or two will suffice, in the conduct of the two prophets Elijah and Elisha.

Although Ahab, a king of Israel, "did evil in the sight of the Lord above all that were before him," yet he did not entirely renounce the Lord. He and his people were sometimes inclined to worship the true God, and at others they served Baal. It was this fluctuation in their minds, which provoked the experiment made by the priest of Baal on the one side, and of Elijah the true prophet, on the other. "Elijah came unto all the people and said how *long halt ye between two opinions, if Jehovah be God follow him; but if Baal then follow him.*"*

* 1 Kings ch. xviii. v. 21.

When this king was besieged in Samaria by Bahadad, king of Syria, who was a professed Pagan, he was miraculously protected, in order to convince both himself and his antagonist, of the superiority of the God of Jacob. "Ahab also terrified at the judgments pronounced against him by Elijah, humbled himself before the Lord, renting his clothes, putting on sackcloth and fasting;" and by this act of humiliation the judgment was suspended. "The Lord said unto Elijah, because he humbleth himself before me, I will not bring the evil in his days; but in his sons days will I bring the evil upon his house." Thus although he was severely censured for his Idolatrous conduct, in this instance he revered the God of his fathers.

When Ahaziah his son was dangerously wounded by a fall, he was sending messengers to enquire of the God of Ekron, whether he should recover; but Elijah was ordered to meet the messengers, and "say unto them, is *it not because there is not a God of Israel that ye go and enquire of Baalzebub the God of Ekron?** Now, therefore, thus saith the Lord, thou shalt

* 2 Kings ch. i. v. 3.

not come down from that bed on which thou art gone up, but shalt surely die."*

The widow who was so peculiarly distinguished by Elisha the prophet, was a Shunamite, and by birth a Pagan; but on account of her attachment to the true religion, she was miraculously favoured in two important instances, in order to confirm her confidence in the God of Israel, and spread the honour of his name among her idolatrous associates.

Naaman the leper was "captain of the host of the king of Syria, a great man with his master, and honourable." Being informed by a female servant, of the miracles wrought by a prophet in Samaria, his sovereign sent large presents to the king of Israel, in order to purchase the assistance of this prophet. When he was advised to wash in the river Jordan, he was offended at the simplicity of the prescription; but upon his compliance, which effected a cure, "He returned to the Man of God, he and all his company, and came and stood before him, and he said, behold, *now I know that there is no God in all the earth but in Israel.*"

It will appear to an attentive reader, that it was the peculiar province of these two prophets

* 2 Kings ch. i. v. 2, 3.

Elijah and Elisha, to confirm the wavering faith of the apostatizing Israelites, and to disseminate a knowledge of the true God among those Pagans who began to have favourable impressions concerning the religion of the Hebrews. To enlarge would be to transcribe too large a portion of the first and second book of Kings, which are worthy of a perusal, with this object particularly in view.

The effects of such conformities and transmutations of religious principles, became most obvious upon the captivity and dispersion of the ten tribes of Israel. The strangers who were sent from Babylon, and the adjacent districts, to inhabit Samaria, in the place of the children of Israel, became partial proselytes to the Jewish religion. It is said that "they feared the Lord and served their own Gods, after the manner of the nations who carried them away from thence:" and in process of time their principles became almost as pure as those of the Jewish nation who remained in the land.

We may also suppose that the alarming denunciations uttered against the surrounding nations by many of the prophets, and the accomplishments of these denunciations, would inspire

them with a superior reverence for the God of the Jews, and lead them to suspect the imbecility of their own Gods. Of their beneficial effects upon the Ninevites, the preaching of Jonah is a memorable instance. Such prophetic judgments were also the more alarming, because they were peculiar to the oracles of Jehovah.

We have no distinct history of the tribes which were conveyed into distant countries. But as the deep affliction of captivity was influential in reclaiming the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, from idolatrous practices, at a subsequent period, and rendered them perfect Monotheists, it is not an extravagant supposition, that correspondent impressions were made upon a large number of individuals; and that they also would become tenacious of those principles and religious customs, which they had neglected or despised, during their prosperity. Such principles could not be devoid of influence upon the people with whom they were intermixed, and they would have a tendency to soften down the horrors of pagan rites.

We are informed, by the sacred records themselves, that the tribes carried into captivity by Nebuchadnezzar, were instrumental in shaking the confidence of the Chaldeans in the power, and probably in the existence of the deities to

whom they had been the most firmly attached. The astonishing wisdom of Daniel; his miraculous endowments of interpreting of dreams, and explaining visions; his inflexible piety towards his God, with the wonderful result; his subsequent influence in the court of his Sovereign; the unsubdued piety and miraculous preservation of the three provincial governors, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, finally established the sovereignty of the great Jehovah, in the very centre of pagan superstition, and brought their renowned magicians and astrologers, those professed oracles of their assumed deities, into contempt.

In our section on the instrumentality of the prophets, it was observed, that they had their peculiar offices, and distinguishing characteristics; and if we attend to the book of Daniel, we shall perceive that the designation of this prophet was to promote, and to proclaim, the progress of true religion among the children of men. The gift of interpreting the dreams and visions of the sovereigns, with which he was so eminently endowed, was most efficacious in spreading the honours of his religion through a very extensive empire; while his own visions and prophecies, anticipated the advent of the great prophet, to the conviction and consolation of succeeding ages.

The singular events which took place during the reigns of Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzer, and Darius, are so closely related to our subject, and illustrative of the principles we have advanced, that we shall, as concisely as possible, state some particulars.

The interesting account commences with informing us, that the king Nebuchadnezzar deposited part of the vessels, which he had carried away from the temple of Jerusalem, into the treasure house of his god: which sufficiently indicates the prevalence of pagan superstition at this period. But a very considerable change was afterwards made in his theological opinions,—as in various other instances,—by the united influence of natural and preternatural means. Daniel, Hananiah, Michael, and Azariah, were, in their childhood, selected from the captives, that they might receive an education with other children; which was to qualify them for the honour to which they were destined, of standing before the king. The appointment itself, manifests both that they discovered unusual capacities, and that the Israelitish character was not in a state of degradation, notwithstanding the humiliating circumstance of their captivity.

Daniel, in these early days, gave a remarkable evidence of pious attachment to his religion, by

being reluctant "to defile himself, as it is expressed, with the portions of the king's meat, or with the wine which he drank." He requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not thus defile himself, being assured that the nutrition authorised by his own laws, would be as favourable to the comely appearance desired, as the richest viands. He solicited that an experiment might be made respecting himself, and his comrades: "and at the end of ten days their countenances appeared firmer and fatter in flesh, than all the children which did eat the portion of the king's meat." But they were endowed with much higher qualifications than these external appearances, for "God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom, and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams:" and "at the end of the days that the king had said, that he should bring them in, then the prince of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar, and the king communed with them, and among them all was found none like Daniel, Hananiah, Michael, and Azariah: therefore stood they before the king; and in all matters of wisdom and understanding, that the king enquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in his realm."

An opportunity soon presented itself, of demonstrating the great superiority of Daniel. When the incapacity of the magicians and astrologers to discover to the king his dream concerning the image, formed of various and discordant materials, exposed them to the destruction, in which Daniel and his companions would have been involved, "they desired mercies of the God of heaven concerning this secret, that they might not perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon." "Then was the secret revealed unto Daniel in a night vision, and Daniel blessed the God of heaven."

When he was introduced into the royal presence, the king asked him, "art thou able to make known unto me the dream which I have seen, and the interpretation thereof?" Daniel answered in the presence of the king, and said, the secret which the king hath demanded, cannot the wisemen, the astrologers, the magicians, the soothsayers, shew unto the king: *but there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets*, and *maketh known unto the king Nebuchadnezzar, what shall be in the latter days.*" After Daniel had recalled the dream to the king's remembrance, and gave him the interpretation thereof, the king, astonished at his wisdom, concluded that Daniel must himself be a subordinate deity in an human

form. "He fell upon his knees and worshipped Daniel, and commanded that they should offer an oblation, and sweet odours unto him. And the king said unto Daniel, *of a truth your God is a God of Gods, and a Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets*, seeing thou couldst reveal this secret." Daniel was rewarded in the most distinguished manner. "The king made Daniel a great man, and gave him many great gifts, and made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and chief of the governors over all the wise men of Babylon. Then Daniel requested of the king, and he set his three companions, whose names were changed into Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, over the affairs of Babylon: but Daniel sat in the gate of the king."

It appears, from the continued history, that this singular event, although it placed before the eye of the king the future dissolution of his mighty empire, made but a transient impression upon his mind; for not long after, "Nebuchadnezzar, the king, made an image of gold, whose height was threescore cubits, and the breadth thereof, six cubits: he set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon; and he sent to gather together the princes, the governors, the captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counsellors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers

of the provinces, to come to the dedication of the image which Nebuchadnezzar, the king, had set up : and they stood before the image :— then an herald cried aloud, to you it is commanded, O people, nations, and languages, that at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sacbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, ye fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar, the king, hath set up ; and whoso falleth not down and worshippeth, shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace."

It may, at first view, be difficult to account for this solemn farce, and most extravagant requisition. Had such a project been formed, and such an edict been issued, posterior to the time, when the king was afflicted with insanity, we should imagine, that they proceeded from a residue of the disease. There is one supposition, however, which will explain his conduct ; which is the more probable, as it is founded upon the natural workings of the human mind, in given circumstances.

We may be assured, that the triumphant success of Daniel, would excite the envy and jealousy of the astrologers, and magicians, whose ignorance had been so fully detected, and exposed ; and their rage was doubtless rendered

the more implacable, by the fearful apprehensions, that their whole craft would be in danger, and that they would sink into permanent contempt. As it was universally the opinion of Pagans, that they could create their own gods, and that the work of their own hands would be able to save them, these magicians, soothsayers, and astrologers, were resolved to make one grand effort to recover their credit with the sovereign and his subjects; and, estimating the beneficence of their gods according to the value of the materials of which they were made, and their power, according to the magnitude of their sizes, they concluded, that an image of *gold, threescore cubits in height, and six cubits in breadth*, would become a very potent rival to this wonder-working deity of the Hebrews. That the plan was theirs, and that the king issued his commands by their suggestion, is plain, from their not being included in the injunction to worship the image, to which it was enjoined upon all the princes and nobles of the land that they should yield obedience.

Although Nebuchadnezzar had been compelled to acknowledge the superiority of Daniel, and of Daniel's God, to his magicians, and the deities they professed to serve, he was still a *polytheist*. His concession, that the Jehovah

of Israel, was the God of Gods, contained also an avowal, that there were other Gods, besides him. The early habits of superstition, and the accustomed influence of the Pagan priests, over the mind of the king, on the one hand, and the miraculous interposition of this strange god of the Hebrews, on the other, might, possibly, create such an embarrassment in his mind, as would dispose him to bring the contest to an issue, by complying with the earnest desires of the surrounding magi: and he was determined to have the contest conducted with all possible solemnity.

This view of the subject appears to be well calculated to explain the reason of those stupendous miracles, which have surprised multitudes, and staggered the faith of some.

The Hebrew chiefs did not obey the edict. Nor could they consistently obey it, for their principles were adverse to a plurality of gods, although their Jehovah should be allowed to preside over them. They remembered the great command, "thou shalt have no other Gods but me: thou shalt not make unto thyself any graven image: thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them."

The absurdities of superstition, may accord together. One error may, possibly, be less than

another, or less injurious in its consequences, without being fatal to its existence. But *truth* cannot asssociate with *error;* and to this obvious impossibility must be ascribed, that very unpleasant and unaccommodating character, with which unbelievers are disposed to stigmatise, both the Jewish and the Christian dispensation.

The king condescended to expostulate with the recusants: He warned them of the punishment threatened to disobedience, and asks "*who is that God, that shall deliver you out of my hands?*" They firmly answer, "if it be so, *our God whom we serve, is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace; and he will deliver us out of thine hand, Oh king:* but if not, we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up."

"Then was Nebuchadnezzar full of fury, and the form of his visage was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. And he commanded that they should heat the furnace one seven times more than it was wont to be heated." And he commanded the most mighty men that were in his army, to bind the recusants and to cast them into the burning fiery furnace; "and because the king's commandment was urgent, and the furnace exceeding hot, the

flame of the fire slew those men that took them to the furnace."

These minute particulars are indications of a determined trial, and, as it were, a defiance of the power of Jehovah, to deliver the offenders from his resentment. But again, as in the contest between the prophets of Baal, and Elijah, did the God of the Israelites prevail. The triumph of Jehovah over Pagan superstition, and the malice of impostors was complete. When "the princes, governors, and captains, and the king's counsellors being gathered together, saw these men, upon whose bodies the fire had no power, nor was an hair of their head singed; neither were their coats changed, nor the smell of fire had passed on them; Nebuchadnezzar spake, and said, *blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, who hath sent his angel, and delivered his servants, that trusted in him,* and have changed the king's words, and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve, nor worship any God except their own. Therefore, I make a decree that every people, nation, and language, which speak any thing amiss, against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made a dunghill; *because there is no other God, that can deliver after this sort.*

Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, in the province of Babylon."

It is probable that the permanent influence of these two events, upon the mind of Nebuchadnezzar, was confined to his admission of the Jehovah of Israel, into the number of his gods, and giving him the precedency over them, as he had given to Daniel a precedency over all the wise men of the east; without his being possessed of that devotional spirit, or impressed with that reverential awe, which becomes the service of the most high God.

But a subsequent event finally produced these happy effects. He had another dream, for the explanation of which he applied to his astrologers and magicians in vain; and the inspired wisdom of Daniel, again became conspicuous. The interpretation given to this dream was most alarming. The tree which was represented in the vision as an emblem of himself, and as giving shelter and support to every living creature, was to be cut down into a trunk. He was informed by the faithful and conscientious Daniel: "This is the decree of the Most High, which is come upon my lord the king: that they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with

the beasts of the field, and they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and they shall wet thee with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over thee, *till thou know that the most high ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will.* And whereas they commanded to leave the stump of the tree and roots, thy kingdom shall be sure unto thee, *after that thou shalt have known that the heavens do rule.* Wherefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable unto thee, and break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities, by shewing mercy to the poor, if it may be a lengthening of thy prosperity."

Notwithstanding his confidence in this prophet, neither the unwelcome interpretation of the dream, nor the admonitions of Daniel, seemed to make a durable impression. Nebuchadnezzar was the most potent sovereign on the face of the earth. He was surrounded with riches and splendour; and with their inseparable companions, the most servile homage and adulation. His frowns were the signal of death, and his smiles ensured the most enviable prosperity. Thus situated, pride and vanity were still his ruling passions; and although he was forewarned that he was soon to be expelled from the throne, his mind was intoxicated with his greatness, which he

proudly ascribed to his own wisdom and prowess. At the end of twelve months he walked in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon; and the king spake and said, "Is not this great Babylon that I have built, for the people of my kingdom, *by the might of my power for the honour of my majesty?*" While the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, "O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken, the kingdom is departed from thee," &c. and the same hour was the thing fulfilled.

Experience is a more effectual teacher than admonitions the most solemn and authoritative. This alone could completely reform the tribes of Judah and Benjamin from the practice of Idolatry; and it was this alone which could inspire the proud king of Babylon with pious humiliation, and profound homage, towards the universal sovereign. The depth of his degradation subdued the haughtiness of his heart. His restoration to the rank of human beings, from which he had been expelled, and to the enjoyment of his sovereignty, filled his breast with devout gratitude. This proud boaster now condescends to make a public statement of the marvellous events which had befallen him; to ackowledge that his humiliating sufferings were the just punishment of his pride; to make

known the ignorance of his magicians, and the other servants of false gods, and to celebrate the wisdom of Daniel, the inspired prophet of the true God; to express his sole dependence upon Jehovah, and to propose his own conduct as an example of the profoundest reverence towards him.

The following is the exordium of his public declaration. "Nebuchadnezzar, the king, unto all people, nations, and languages that dwell on all the earth, peace be multiplied unto you. *I thought it good to show the signs and wonders that the high God hath wrought towards me! How great are his signs, and how mighty are his wonders. His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and his dominion is from generation to generation.*" Instead of concealing, he gives the most extensive publicity to the humiliated and insane state to which he had been reduced, and confesses the cause to have been the pride of his heart; closing his narrative in the following strain of elevated Piety: "And at the end of the days, I, Nebuchadnezzar, lift up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and *I blessed the Most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation. And all the inhabitants*

of the earth are reputed as nothing; and he doth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay his hand, or say unto him what dost thou? At the same time my reason returned unto me, and for the glory of my kingdom, mine honour and brightness returned unto me; and my councellors, and my lords sought unto me: and I was established in my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added unto me. *Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol, and honour the king of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment:* and those that walk in pride he is able to abase."

We shall leave it to our readers to meditate upon the natural influence of such extraordinary confessions and acknowledgments, through the extensive empire of this mighty Sovereign. In most arbitrary governments the opinions of the sovereign are adopted by his subjects; and this adoption will be as extensive as the knowledge of his opinions, in states where scarcely an individual has been accustomed to think for himself. The decree of prohibiting "every people, nation, and language to speak any thing amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, under the severest punishments, would not only

impose silence, but inspire dread; and we may safely conclude, that the God of these Hebrews would, in consequence of such pious declarations, be revered by all the subjects of this great monarch, not only in Chaldea, but in Syria, Arabia, and Egypt; for to those regions did the immediate sovereignty of Nebuchadnezzar, and the power of his conquests extend. Although they, with the king, continued polytheists, the God of the Hebrews must have been considered as the *transcendant* God; and they must not only have revered him as more powerful, but as more wise and more holy than the Gods they were accustomed to worship. Nor could such sentiments prevail, without producing a considerable degree of *reform* in their worship: rendering their superstitious rites less impure and immoral, than those which were transmitted to them from their more barbarous ancestors; and greatly meliorating the state of the moral world.

Of Belshazzar, the son of Nebuchadnezzar, who succeeded to the throne, the scriptures have recorded nothing but his folly and his ruin. He was manifestly a profane voluptuary. He seems to have placed the very extraordinary occurrences of his father's reign among

those fabulous narratives with which superstition always abounds : and to treat his solemn and pious edicts as the effusions of a disordered brain; for he instituted a festival in derision of the Jewish religion, and in open contempt of the God whom his father had so profoundly reverenced. We are informed that "Belshazzar the king made a great feast to a thousand of his Lords, and drank wine before the thousand. Belshazzar, while he tasted the wine, commanded to bring the gold and silver vessels, which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken out of the temple which was at Jerusalem, that the king and his princes, his wives and his concubines, might drink therein. They drank wine, *and praised the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone.*"

This was a determined insult of the God of heaven, and setting that tremendous power at defiance, which his father had with so much humility ascribed to him. A conduct so impious, unreproved, would have effaced all those impressions in favour of the new religion, which had been made upon his father's subjects: and the thousands of his profligate lords would soon have polluted the principles of the community at large. An alarming miracle interposed to prevent a total relapse into paganism. The magicians were

again applied to, but it was in vain. They could not interpret the solemn warning inscribed upon the wall of the palace. Their incapacity enabled Belshazzar to recollect the *inspired* servant of his father, to whom he offered the most splendid rewards. Daniel, in conformity to one characteristic of a true prophet, expressed a dignified indifference to these promised honours, and answered to the king, "let thy gifts be to thyself, and give thy rewards to another; yet will I read the writing unto the king, and make known unto him the interpretation." Daniel faithfully stated to him also the cause of this miraculous interference, and of the terrible judgments denounced by it. After he had recalled to his recollection the melancholy condition of his father, as a punishment "because his heart was lifted up, and his mind hardened in pride, until he knew that the most high God ruled in the kingdoms of men;" Daniel adds, "and thou his son, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knowest all this. *But hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven, and they have brought the vessels out of his house before thee, and thou, and thy lords, thy wives and thy concubines, have drunk wine in them, and thou hast praised the gods of silver, and gods of brass, iron, wood, and stone, which see not, nor hear, nor know; and the God in*

whose hands thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified."

"In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain; and Darius the Median took the kingdom."

Thus terminated the independence of this mighty empire. Isaiah, who predicted its ruin, considers the event as a triumph over those Gods, whom the impious Belshazzar attempted to reinstate in all their honours. "Babylon is fallen, is fallen, and all the graven images of her gods, he hath broken unto the ground." "Bel boweth down, Nebo stoopeth, their idols were upon the beasts, and upon the cattle," &c. &c. &c.*

Profane historians inform us that the city was taken by surprise, under the direction of the great Cyrus, and that it was in consequence of their intoxication, that the king and his nobles became an easy prey to the conquerors. The prophet Isaiah had pointed out this Cyrus by name as the instrument of providence, and has explicitly stated the important object of the severe judgments he was ordained to inflict. "Thus saith the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden to subdue nations be-

* See Isa. ch. xxi. xlvi. 1.

fore him; I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two-leaved gates, and the gates shall not be shut. I will go before thee and make the crooked places straight: I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron, and I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places: *that thou mayest know, that I the Lord, who call thee by thy name, am the God of Israel.* For Jacob my servant's sake, and Israel mine elect, I have called thee by thy name: I have surnamed thee though thou hast not known me. *I am the Lord and there is none else; there is no God besides me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me: that they may know from the rising of the sun and from the west, that there is none besides me: I am the Lord, and there is none else: I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil. I the Lord do all these.*"*

Every attentive reader of the sacred pages will be convinced, that the denunciations pronounced against Babylon, are peculiarly frequent and terrific. In some of these denunciations, the manner of her destruction, and the immediate cause of it are so minutely described, that they appear like a narrative of facts, rather than prophetic threatenings pronounced. Isaiah

* Is. ch. xlv. v. 1, 7.

takes the lead, with a dignified triumph. "The burden of Babylon, which Isaiah the son of Amos did see. Lift ye up a banner upon the high mountain, exalt the voice unto them, shake the hand that they may go into the gates of the nobles. I have commanded my sanctified ones,—or those ordained to the office; I have also called my mighty ones for mine anger, even them that rejoice in my highness. The noise of a multitude in the mountains like as of a great people: a tumultuous noise of the kingdoms and nations gathered together: the Lord of hosts mustered the hosts of the battle. They come from a far country, from the end of heaven, even the Lord, and the weapons of his indignation, to destroy the whole land," &c. &c. Behold I will stir up the *Medes* against them, which shall not regard silver, and for gold they shall not delight in it. Their bow shall also dash the young men to pieces, and they shall have no pity on the fruit of the womb, and their eye shall not spare children; and Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. It shall never be inhabited; neither shall it be dwelt in, from generation to generation; neither shall the Arabian pitch tents there; neither shall the shepherds make their folds there;

and the wild beasts of the islands shall enter their desolate houses, and dragons in their pleasant palaces; and her time is near to come, and her days shall not be prolonged.*

Jeremiah also ascribes the cause of her destruction, to her idolatrous practices, in the following emphatic manner: "The word of the Lord, spake against Babylon, and against the land of the Chaldean, "by Jeremiah the prophet: declare ye among the nations, and publish, and set up a standard; publish and conceal not: say Babylon is taken; *Bel is confounded; Merodach is broken in pieces; her idols are confounded, her images are broken to pieces*, &c. A sword is upon the Chaldeans, saith the Lord, and upon the inhabitants of Babylon, and upon her princes, and upon her wise men, &c. &c. *A drought is upon her waters, and they shall be dried up; for it is the land of graven images, and they were mad upon their idols,"* &c. Behold a people shall come from the north, and a great nation, and many kings, shall be raised up from the coasts of the earth. They shall hold the bow and the lance; they are cruel, and will not show mercy, &c. The king of Babylon hath

* Is. ch. xiii. See also ch. xiv.

heard the report of them, and his hands waxed feeble ; anguish took hold of him, a pang, as of a woman in travail," &c. " Wherefore, behold the days come, saith the Lord, *that I will do judgment upon her graven images,* and through all her land, the wounded shall groan. A sound of a cry cometh from Babylon, and her mighty men are taken ; every one of their bows is broken, for the Lord God of recompence, shall surely requite, and I will make drunk her princes, and her wise men, her captains, and her rulers, and her mighty men: and they shall sleep a perpetual sleep, saith the king, whose name is the Lord of hosts.*

Had Jeremiah been present with the army of Cyrus, to witness the peculiar manner in which the impregnable city was taken, by diverting the waters of the river from the usual channel ; and to witness the consternation of Belshazzar and his nobles, and the slaughter which ensued, he could scarcely have given a more lively description of these horrid events.†

The above are concise extracts from numerous other denunciations of similar import, which evince the vast importance that was attached to the destruction of the Babylonish empire, in the moral economy of divine providence.

* Jeremiah ch. l. See also ch. xli.

† See Note N.

This public and miraculous disgrace of its gods, and their deceitful priests, was in fact an abolition of the empire of paganism in all the regions of the east. Babylon was the chief seat of systematic superstition and idolatry. Its magicians and soothsayers, were men of education and learning. To them was the character of *wise men* given almost exclusively. They were the admiration of the nations. They professed intercourse with the heavenly bodies, and to interpret the mandates of the deities, which were supposed to inhabit them. They were always consulted upon the important matters of state; nor was any enterprize undertaken without their advice and concurrence. The abolition of such mental tyranny was, therefore, prerequisite for the diffusion of superior light and knowledge. But this tyranny was too extensive, and too deeply rooted, to be eradicated by means purely natural. The cause of God, and of truth, therefore, demanded *preternatural* means, and such as should impress terror and conviction upon the servants of idolatry; as should console the house of Judah in its humiliated state, alienate their minds from the worship of idols, and expedite their repentance, that they might be qualified to return to the land of their fathers; such as should convince the nations, *that*

the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. The nature of the miracles performed, was correspondent to the causes which gave rise to them; such as fully demonstrated the interference of Israel's God, and the infliction of retributive justice, by his almighty power. The marvellous protection of the three governors in the fiery furnace, precisely corresponded with the nature of the sufferings, which tyranny had dictated as a punishment to disobedience. The instant destruction of their adversaries by the same means, marked, in the most awful and impressive manner, the distinction made between the friends, and the enemies of the living God. The miraculous inscription was a demonstration, that the approaching calamity was not to be classed with the common rise and fall of empires; that it was immediately inflicted by the hand of heaven, as a tremendous punishment of the grossest idolatry, in its very act of insulting that God, "*who alone forms the light and creates darkness, makes peace, and creates evil;*"—*and* "*that they may know that there is none else.*"

Darius the Mede, "who took the kingdom," was uncle to the great Cyrus, and the Cyaxares of profane writers. He was the ostensible sovereign of the kingdoms which the arms of Cyrus had subdued. This conqueror was by

birth a Persian, and educated, from his infancy, according to the strict discipline which was peculiar to that kingdom. He was instructed by his father, Astyages, in all the principles of morals which were then known, and taught to revere the Gods. He was also initiated in the mysteries of Divination, which was considered as an important science. This was, according to Xenophon, peculiarly necessary, that he might judge for himself of favourable or unfavourable omens; and thus escape the deceptions to which he was exposed from unprincipled magicians and soothsayers. Such an education, united with the very superior endowments of his mind, would enable him soon to perceive the difference between the Jehovah of the Jews and the Gods of his ancestors; and the dispositions of his heart would induce him to embrace the pure and sublime morality of the Jewish religion. Thus prepared, the miraculous events at Babylon, during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, and the astonishing scenes of which he was not only the witness but the principal agent, were calculated to make the deepest impression upon his own mind, and also upon that of his uncle Darius; and which afterwards proved so peculiarly favourable to the Jews.

The wisdom of Daniel, who was advancing

in years, and those miraculous endowments, by which he had exposed the ignorance of the magicians, entitled him to superior honours. "It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom, an hundred and twenty princes, which should be over the whole kingdom, and over these, three presidents, of whom Daniel was first, that the princes might give accounts unto them, and the king receive no damage." The Magicians did not appear to possess influence at his court; it was now the Presidents and Princes who resented that this Hebrew should become their superior. But as his integrity could not be impeached, they had recourse to his religion. They did not attempt, like the magicians under Nebuchadnezzar, to render the worship of images the snare to entangle him; the veneration of the true God was now too firmly established. But they surprised Darius into an edict which flattered his vanity, and of which he perceived not the pernicious consequences. It was not to enjoin an act of idolatry, but merely to *prohibit* the worship of any God, or presenting a petition to any man, for thirty days, excepting to the king himself.

The pious Daniel considered such an omission as a breach of duty; nor would he compromise with his conscience by the privacy of his wor-

ship. "When Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house, and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks unto God as he did aforetime." The extreme sorrow of the king when he was informed that Daniel had disobeyed the royal edict, manifested at once a just sense of his own folly, and the highest respect for this faithful servant of God. Instead of being in a rage against Daniel, "He was sore displeased with himself." When he found that his decree was irrevocable, he indulged the hope that the God who had preserved the conscientious Jews from the fiery furnace, would also preserve Daniel from the rage of the Lions. "He passed the night in fasting; and he arose very early in the morning, and went in haste unto the den of Lions; and he cried with a lamentable voice unto Daniel, and said, "O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God whom thou servest continually, *able* to deliver thee from the Lions?" And when he heard that they had done him no hurt, the king was exceeding glad." Thus, in the whole of his conduct, did this sovereign manifest the highest reverence for the God of Israel; and this reverence inspired him with humility, justice, and humanity, infinitely beyond what was usually practised by the

sovereigns in those days of absolute power. He attempted to compensate for his rash and inconsiderate vanity, by publishing a decree, of an opposite tenor from that which had exposed his servant to so much danger; for it enforced the reverence of that God unto whom he had forbidden petitions to be represented. "He wrote to all people, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth," by which expression we are to understand the great and unparalleled extent of his dominions; "Peace be multiplied unto you. I make a decree, that in every dominion of my kingdom, *men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel, for he is the living God, and stedfast for ever; and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed, and his dominion shall be even to the end. He delivereth and rescueth, and he worketh signs and wonders in heaven and in earth.*"

The above epitome of the religious history of the Jews evinces the following facts:—It was not the sole object of the Deity to favour a particular people; they were preferred on account of the piety of their ancestors, but it was to render the nations of the earth blessed by their instrumentality, as well as to afford to them an opportunity of being in reality the distinguished favourites of heaven:—The grand ob-

ject of blessing mankind, was pursued in every stage of the political existence of this selected people:—The pre-requisites for these blessings consisted in the destruction of idolatry with its surrounding enormities:—All the means were used, for this purpose, which could operate upon the minds of the subjects to be influenced, and which were consistent with the character of free and moral agents: the obstinate, perverse, and cruel, were chiefly subdued by terror; but in proportion as mankind became more civilized, milder methods were pursued, and the allurements of national prosperity were placed before their eyes. Beneficial effects were thus introduced, and diffused to a considerable extent; for, although a multitude of unthinking and profligate Jews apostatized from the true religion, multitudes of Pagans "learned to know the Lord:" In the land of Jewish captivity, when the worship of the living and true God appeared to be in such imminent danger, from the contagion of bad example, and the prevalence of Pagan superstition, their religion took the deepest root, and bore the choicest fruits; by the miraculous interference of Divine Providence, superstition was subdued in the centre of its empire. The great conquerors of the earth learned to revere the Jehovah of Israel, bore public testimony to

the greatness of his might, and commanded the nations to stand in awe before him.

Thus far has sacred history conducted us. The true religion having acquired, by the perpetual care and protection of the universal sovereign, a due degree of energy and strength, ostensible interference was withheld. But whoever attends to the series of events which fill the pages of profane history, from the time of the Babylonish captivity, and the reinstatement of these captives, in the land of their fathers; whoever believes that the Deity has not totally withdrawn his secret operations from the concerns of mortals, will be disposed to ascribe various occurrences to the continued interposition of Providence; for he will perceive the surprizing co-operation of these natural events, in the refinement of manners, improvement of morals, and diffusion of knowledge. With the *Jews* was the grand deposit of religious truth; and whenever the *Jews* individually or collectively were patronized and protected, *these* were patronized and protected. As their religion had for its basis a much higher object than the pride of empire, they were not reinstated in worldly gran-

deur; they were placed in a state of inferiority; subjected to other powers, and not unfrequently oppressed by them. But *their religion was revered.* This was a clear demonstration of its innate greatness; for it had not the imposing splendour of sublunary greatness to recommend it. Fully to elucidate this fact would be to transcribe the history of many ages. We shall simply hint at a few circumstances which presented themselves, in the earlier periods of their emancipation from the abject bondage of Babylon.

The deep veneration entertained by Cyrus for the God of Israel, is recorded by the historians of his reign, in a manner correspondent with sacred history. It was manifested by the most splendid acts of benevolence and indulgence towards these captives. He restored the rich treasure of their sacred vessels, which had been profaned in libations to idols; and he made the most liberal grants to promote the re-instatement of their worship in all its splendour.

Notwithstanding a temporary interruption by Cambyses, the son of Cyrus, and the Artaxerxes of the scriptures, his successors, Darius the son of Hystaspes, and Xerxes the son of Darius, named Artaxerxes by Ezra, greatly favoured

the Jews. The former permitted and promoted the building of the temple, notwithstanding the strong efforts of the Chutheans to prevent it; and the latter "commanded that the remaining gold and silver in the country of Babylon, which had been dedicated to the service of God, should be sent to Jerusalem for the use of the sacrifices." The following passage in his edict, as recorded by Ezra, sufficiently indicates the motives of his actions; "whatsoever is commanded by the God of heaven, let it diligently be done for the house of the God of heaven; *for why should there be wrath against the realm for the king and his sons.*"*

The perilous state of the Jews, who remained under the immediate jurisdiction of the Persian sovereigns, from the hatred of Haman, and their subsequent advancement into more exalted favours than they had ever enjoyed, are recorded in the book of Esther, and enlarged upon by their historian Josephus. The same historian informs us, that in the days of Alexander, the Jews who were in Judea, incurred his displeasure by a conscientious refusal to assist him in the siege of Tyre, but that his resentment was changed into the admiration of their piety. Whatever credit may be given to

* Ezra ch. vii. 23.

his singular dream, and to the particular mode pursued by the high priest which pacified his wrath, it is a fact *that he was appeased.* We are told also, and it is highly probable, that the books of Daniel were shewn to him, in which was prophesied the overthrow of the Persian empire by his victorious arms, at which he would doubtless rejoice: and it is certain that he granted them many privileges. Josephus asserts, that "when the king came into the city, he went up to the temple, where he sacrificed to God, according to the directions of the high priest, whom he treated, together with the other Priests, with great honour."*

"Ptolomy Soter," says Josephus, "after the death of Alexander, seized upon Jerusalem by stratagem; for, entering the city on the sabbath, under pretence of sacrificing, he got possession of the city without any trouble. In this event we perceive the strong attachment of the Jews to what they deemed to be an indispensable duty, and the popular respect shewn to the God of Israel, by those who still believed in a plurality of Gods. Many of the inhabitants of Judea and Jerusalem, Samaria and Garizim, were carried into Egypt." This treatment, however severe

* Antiq. of Jews, B. xi. ch. viii.

and unjust, had its moral and theological advantages. It proved honourable to themselves, gave them an opportunity of displaying their superior virtues, and greatly contributed to the spread of true religion. "Hearing that the Hierosolymites *were the most strict observers of their oaths and words*, from the accounts which Alexander's ambassadors reported, after the defeat of Darius, he disposed many of them into garrisons, and put them on the same level at Alexandria with the Macedonians, exacting of them an oath of allegiance to him and his successors."

His son Ptolemy Philadelphus, ordered the Jewish laws to be translated into the Greek language, which was the most extensively known. He also liberated an hundred and twenty thousand persons, who were captives in Egypt, generously paying, out of the public treasury, the price of their redemption. It is obvious that such proceedings were the strongest evidence of the exalted opinion, entertained for the sacred writings, by a Gentile sovereign, which not only was highly honourable to the Jews, but was the means of rendering the duties of morality more generally known, and a reverence of the living and true God more extensively diffused. We refer to our historian Josephus,

for the particulars of this remarkable event, and shall simply advert to two circumstances elucidating our subject. When the petition was presented by Aristeus to the sovereign, in favour of the Jews, after orders had been given for the translation of their laws, the following argument was used: "I presume to ask by what means such a thing can be accomplished, when so many Jews continue slaves in your kingdom? You will perform an action answerable to your generosity and goodness, if you set these at liberty, *since the same God, who bestowed upon them their laws, does preserve and protect you in your kingdom, and both they and we worship the same God, the creator of all things, calling him by one common name,* JUPITER, *for as much as he bestows life upon all.*"

In the address of Demetrius Phalereus, his Librarian, who first proposed to the king the plan of adding the sacred manuscripts to his collection of books, is the following passage. "It is necessary you should have them exact and regular; *for the institutions contained therein, being God's own thoughts, are full of the most profound wisdom and integrity,* which is the reason, as Hecateus says, that neither poets nor historians have mentioned them without reverence and awe, *because the system of morality*

laid down therein, is the most perfect and agreeable to right reason."

The Jews received similar favours and protection from those generals who succeeded to Alexander in the possession of the regions which had submitted to his arms. "Seleucus Nicator, made them free of all the cities which he had built in Asia, and lower Syria, and also of Antioch, the capital city of his kingdom; putting them upon the same footing with the Macedonians and Greeks who dwelt there." He paid great respect to their religion. Antiochus, as a reward for the assistance they had given him, in his contest with Egypt, decreed to supply them with every thing which related to their sacrifices and religious services. He revered all their laws, and issued proclamations through all his kingdom, that no stranger should be permitted to enter the inward court of the temple, or otherways violate any of their religious customs. He gave orders to Zeuxis his general, to place two thousand Jewish families from Mesopotamia and Babylonia, in the strong castles, and other necessary places; for, says he, "I take them to be friendly guardians of our affairs, both on account of their piety towards God, and the great testimony of fidelity which they gave to my ancestors."

It will not be necessary to proceed farther. The above are sufficient testimonies of the superior piety, and moral habits, of the Jewish people; and of the deep impression their holy religion had made upon the minds of the great rulers of the world. An impression which could not fail to extend its effects to their innumerable subjects, and in some considerable degree humanize their minds. The permission obtained by the Jews to establish synagogues, and worship the God of their fathers, wherever they were placed, would have a tendency to extend and confirm these impressions. Every synagogue was in reality a *temple erected to the true God*, amidst surrounding Paganism, and thus they shone as lamps in dark places. The superior purity of their worship would gradually bring the absurd and horrid rites of the Pagan worship into disrepute and abhorrence: and the morality of their laws, would attract the notice of all those who considered the moral duties of importance to the welfare of mankind. From these sources, philosophers were able to derive their maxims of wisdom, and the most renowned reformers their theological tenets.

It is a peculiarity which is worthy of notice, that although the Jews were so tenacious of religion, wherever they were placed, and preserved themselves distinct, by holding intermarriages with the heathen inhabitants, in abhorrence, they were in other respects social and accommodating: for in Chaldea, their intercourse with surrounding nations was so frequent and intimate, that their own language became corrupted, and, in some instances, it was totally forgotten. Those also who were settled in the Grecian provinces, acquired the title of *Hellenists*, from their familiar acquaintance with the Greek tongue. These two opposite circumstances united in the promotion of the grand object. Their scrupulous attention to the peculiarities of their own religion, preserved it from being blended with Paganism, as had been the case with the Israelites in the land of Canaan; while their familiar intercourse with the surrounding Pagans, not only softened prejudices, but implanted a conviction of the moral and religious superiority of this singular people.

The reason of man readily assents to the existence of *one* universal cause of all things; the reason of man informs him, that the existence of

more than one is not necessary. The Monotheist must assert that *superfluities* are the creatures of the imagination. When he attends to the nature of superstition, he discovers that the Gods of human formation have a shape and character, analogous to the state and character of human minds. If these be savage, brutal, timid, the gods will be clothed with horrors, and become the Molochs of their worshippers. When a perception of benefits awakens the grateful feelings, and the designs of the cultivator, mechanic, or navigator prosper under his endeavours, he contemplates and worships the imaginary sources of good, as the *benefactors* of the human species. Thus will Ceres, Pomona, Bacchus, Neptune, &c. take place of more ferocious deities. The personification of wisdom produced a Minerva; of the arts and sciences, an Apollo; of beauty, Venus, and the graces. The civilized imagination of poets finally became so playful that it delighted to populate woods and groves, rivers and mountains, with nymphs, naiads, fawns, &c. animating the dulness of rural scenery, and introducing a vivacity of language, to which the moderns themselves have recourse, in order to embellish their descriptions, notwithstanding the delusion no longer exists.

Thus will the character of the divinity wor-

shipped, always indicate the character of the worshipper; and whatever has a tendency to reform this, will necessarily reform Paganism. The admission of the Great Jehovah of the Jews among the divinities of Pagan worship, and his acknowledged superiority, introduced a new æra in Paganism itself. He was doubtless their *Jupiter*, the father of gods and men; and notwithstanding the intermixture which absurd and impure imaginations sometimes made, he was considered not only as more powerful, but of a more perfect character than the others. The idea of a Supreme, reduced the other beings into a salutary subordination. Their empire was more limited, their morals were more pure. That great Being, whose condescension is infinite, winked at these times of ignorance, as the Apostle expresses it; resented not so unworthy an alliance; for by these means he was gradually leading forwards his untutored offspring, to a more perfect knowledge of himself.

The Apostle Paul observed, when he was at Athens, an altar erected to the *unknown God*. Whether this was a general confession of the ignorance and embarrassment of their minds, respecting the great first cause, as some suppose,

or referred, as others suppose, to the desire of the Athenians to honour some particular god, who had averted a great calamity from their city, it was still a *confession of ignorance*, and also an indication of a grateful disposition. Both were preparatory to the reception of the truths of revelation. To be conscious of our own ignorance is, in fact, an advancement in knowledge. A mind perfectly in the dark cannot perceive its own darkness. Their more savage ancestors thought that they *knew* their gods most intimately, and that they perfectly resembled the most tyrannic and depraved models of the human species. When reason begins to doubt of the absurdities which had checked its exertions, it is weakening their influence. It will find its way through one class of errors; and should it not immediately arrive at truth, the new class of adopted errors will not be so formidable, or so tenacious of their hold. To doubt of the existence of beings whose attributes and characters are not as they should be, not only manifests the struggles of a superior mind, but it is a noble attempt to burst the chains of ignorance. It prepares the mind to yield to the force of evidence which may finally lead to truth. No season could be more opportune for Paul to preach the knowledge of the true God

to his audience, than when they confessed that they were worshipping an *unknown God.*

It is hoped that the above strictures will manifest the designs of Providence in its various dispensations, respecting the heathen world:—silence the cavils of unbelievers, against occasional miracles, as if their sole object were to amaze and terrify:—enable us to trace an *unity* in the divine plan, amidst the diversity of operations; and prove that this unity consists in the determined production of good by the diffusion of light and knowledge in exact proportion as the minds of men were prepared for their reception:—that the heathen world was not excluded from the divine favour, by the selection of a particular people, to be the deposits of moral and religious truths; but that *their* interest was also consulted by the great father of all. In a word, we perceive that the human race, which was plunged into ignorance and vice, beyond the influence of their natural powers to extricate themselves, have been gradually conducted by a superintending providence, from palpable darkness to dawns of light, which increased in every age, until they became, as it were, the *Aurora*, which ushered in the *Sun of Righteousness*, destined to illuminate the world.

CHAPTER IV.

OBSERVATIONS AND INFERENCES RESPECTING THE DIVINE ORIGIN OF THE JEWISH DISPENSATION.

We have in the preceding Chapters stated every leading circumstance, in the history of this wonderful people, that the *grand object* may appear in a conspicuous point of view, and the characteristic excellences of the dispensation become duly impressive. The whole history of events, relative to the subject, is placed before the reader, without the selection of particular facts, in order to support a favourite hypothesis. The reader is thus enabled to pronounce concerning the validity of the writer's remarks, and the legitimacy of his inferences.

In his opinion, the preceding investigations have established the position as indubitable, that *the Jewish dispensation is most worthy of a divine origin;*—from its nature and tendency;—from the peculiar manner in which the important plan

has been executed;—and from the moral characters of the agents employed. With a short illustration of these three positions, we shall close the present subject.

I. The Jewish dispensation, and this dispensation alone, communicated to mankind at a very early period, while the reasoning powers were in their lowest exercise, such sentiments of the being, natural and relative perfections of God, as perfectly correspond with the dictates of the most enlightened reason; and it has promulgated, in the most ample manner, those religious and moral duties, which we have proved to be essential to human happiness. It has also given the strongest evidences, that the performance of these duties is, in every age, and in every situation, an acceptable service. Obedience has always been rewarded; omissions have always been punished; repentance and reformation have always been received with pardon and complacency. We shall leave our readers to compare these facts with the wisest institutes of antiquity, which affect a divine origin, or with the most renowned systems of ethics which antiquity can boast. We are confident that a comparison will produce the conviction

that, at no one period of human existence, have such steady permanent efforts been made in any other nation, for a series of ages, to maintain the principles of rational theology in their extent and sublimity; or to enforce the practice of morality with such purity, and so correspondent with the universal claims of men, as are eminently displayed through the whole of this dispensation. These singularities are alone to be discovered in the legislation of Moses, and in the pious zeal of his successors.*

One grand object of this dispensation was, to render the principles of true religion, among a distinct people, finally triumphant over the ignorance and darkness which were prevalent in the world. Without such a provision, there is reason to suppose that the whole world would have lost the knowledge of the true God. That universal darkness and error cannot correct themselves is most evident; and the extreme difficulty with which the Jewish people were preserved from idolatry, notwithstanding the superior light and knowledge they enjoyed, manifests the extreme difficulty which attends this process under circumstances the most advantageous.

* See Note O.

The happy consequences of religious knowledge, were not confined to this nation. They were introductory to blessings of which the Gentiles were to become partakers. The repeated annunciation of these facts, in conjunction with the moral history of the Pagan world, represents the Deity as universally benevolent, by a conduct which, upon a superficial view, may appear to have been arbitrary and partial.

The diffusion of religious knowledge, in a manner perfectly adapted to the laws of human nature, and the respected freedom of the human will, are objects worthy of the Deity, and of the relative character he sustains with all his intelligent offspring; and they forcibly teach human beings to respect themselves.

These truths have been rendered so conspicuous in the preceding epitome of the Jewish history, that further enlargement will be unnecessary.

II. As the plan was worthy of God, thus was his superintendence, both ordinary and extraordinary, requisite for its accomplishment. No one can deny the utility, or even the absolute necessity, of those occasional appearances to the patriarchs, at the commencement of this impor-

tant process, in order to call them forth from the general mass of mankind, to direct their steps, confirm their faith, and ensure their obedience. If it be admitted that the removal of the Hebrews from a state of bondage in Egypt, and placing them in the land of Canaan, was an important part of the divine plan, the credibility, nay, the *necessity* of an extraordinary and miraculous interference, must also be admitted. For we cannot suppose that any means simply natural, would have been influential to remove them from a country, where they and their ancestors had sojourned for the space of four hundred years; and where they had been accustomed to long and debasing habits of subjection. Their inspectors, and task masters, their native ignorance, and the extreme servility of their state, precluded the possibility of any united and personal exertion. They could not conspire, much less could they act. Their important services, and their being employed in the most laborious and degrading offices, rendered it highly interesting, both to the Egyptians and their sovereign, to detain them in the land of their bondage. No voluntary concessions or courtesies could be expected from these quarters; and by what strong chain of natural events could upwards of *two millions of people* thus

situated, be at once wrested from the grasp of tyranny? What could possibly induce the people themselves to consent, with one voice, to follow a leader who must have been unknown to a very large majority of them; and whose absence of forty years must have rendered him a stranger to them all? The dangers, difficulties, and wants to which they were exposed on their journey, and during their residence in the wilderness, required a miraculous interposition. Their organization as a nation that was to be distinct and independent; the wisdom that pervaded their political institutions; the purity of all their religious ordinances, without a single model for imitation, manifest the importance and necessity of a divine superintendence.

A people themselves grossly ignorant, surrounded by nations ignorant, depraved, and superstitious in the extreme, must have required a power superior to their own, to preserve them from the influence of the examples they were so prone to imitate. In what could this power consist, but in juster conceptions of a Deity, of duties, and of obligations, enforced by promises and threats adapted to their situation? Whence could these be derived but from the grand source of all knowledge and instruction? Moses, it is true, was educated in all the wis-

dom of the Egyptians, but this wisdom would not have made him a *Monotheist*. It would not inform him that the only living God, the creator and sole governor of the universe, possessed every perfection natural and relative; that he indispensably required the strict observance of every moral virtue; and that he would invariably punish and reward, according to the moral deserts of his people. The Egyptian superstitions would not have inspired those sublimities of devotion which christians themselves have never equalled; with those rules of religious discipline, and maxims of political justice, which christians admire more than they imitate.

Upon the death of this leader, it was necessary that the same principles should be perpetually inculcated by precept and example, and be rendered efficient by the influence of encouragements or of terror. If this be admitted, a succession of holy men, and of prophets, in the manner which has been amply stated, must have been essential to the grand plan of their preservation. Such perpetual requisites could not be expected from natural sources, during these ages of deep ignorance and depravity, but it is easy to advert to a source whence they could be copiously supplied.

The various miracles wrought during the Babylonish captivity, strange as they may appear to have been, vindicate their authenticity by the circumstances which called them forth; and by the beneficial purposes to which they were subservient. It was through their operation that the divine plan received its final accomplishment.

Notwithstanding the miracles recorded in the old Testament appear, in their collected state, to have been numerous, yet when we reflect that not less than fifteen centuries elapsed, from the commencement to the final accomplishment of the divine plan, respecting the Jewish nation, we have reason to be surprised at the comparative paucity of their number. After those occasional appearances to the patriarchs, natural causes were permitted to operate for a series of years, without any ostensible intervention of the Almighty. In the cruel treatment received by Joseph from his brethren; his being sold for a slave; being stationed in the house of Potiphar; his exciting the impure desires of a lascivious woman by his personal attractions; and his subsequent imprisonment from a spirit of revenge, we perceive the subserviency of human passions to the purposes of God. When Joseph

was raised by the immediate interposition of providence from a dungeon, and placed next to the throne of his sovereign, he was recompensed for his distinguished virtue, and rendered a public blessing by the wisdom of his administration; and a new train of events was again made to prepare the way for the promotion of the great plan, apparently according to the natural course of things. The famine in Egypt, and in the neighbouring countries, became the occasional cause of an interview between Joseph and his brethren, which issued in the removal of Jacob and his family from their native land, and was thus introductive of a new and important epoch. The contempt in which the occupation of an herdsman was held by the Egyptians, and the Hebrews being, for several generations, in a state of abject slavery, preserved the race from becoming deeply contaminated by the Egyptian superstitions, without any obvious necessity for a miraculous interference; nor do we learn that it was exerted. Although a rapid series of miracles was manifestly necessary, to liberate these people from a state of bondage; and many difficulties were to be surmounted by supernatural means, as laws were to be instituted and habits formed, before their introduction into the land promised to their fathers, yet

in the midst of these divine interpositions, a singular *œconomy of miracles*, if we may use the phrase, is observable. Thus the miraculous supply of *manna* was continual, because it was continually necessary, being a substitute for grain and pulse; when the people became stationary, and had leisure to slay their cattle, the provision of *Quails* was suspended; but it returned when they were upon the journey. The communications to Moses the leader and legislator, were perpetual and abundant, because every institution was to be introduced and established, by his instrumentality; but when established, it was expected to operate according to its latent powers. Divine communications accordingly became less necessary, and were more sparingly granted to the succeeding prophets; yet they were always proportionate to the exigencies of the case. The history of all the kings of Israel manifests, that from the introduction of a monarchical form of government, to the Babylonish captivity, that is, during the space of about four hundred years, natural causes were permitted to operate in a powerful manner, with varied effects. But when the grand plan was in danger, and miraculous intervention became necessary; and when human propensities and follies plunged this people into idolatrous practices, to a degree

which threatened a total apostasy, then, and then only, were they checked in their sinful career by preternatural interpositions. The miracles performed during the Babylonish captivity were few, but momentous; and they operated according to the natural influence of striking events, upon the minds of their sovereigns the Chaldeans, upon surrounding nations, as well as upon the captives.

It is also remarkable that, in the performance of these miracles, natural means were rendered the mediums of operation, wherever there was an obvious adaptation. In the miracles performed before Pharaoh, many of the judgments inflicted corresponded with the calamities incident to the climate of Egypt, and the peculiarities of the country.* The miracle consisted in the extent and boundaries of their operation; the most distressing of them being confined to the Egyptians; their being produced upon a particular occasion, and to answer a particular purpose;—being predicted;—a pause being allowed for consideration, and their being removed at the instant of intercession. When the destructive swarms of locusts were introduced, Moses stretched forth his rod over the land of Egypt, and the Lord brought an *east*

* See Note P.

wind all that day, and all that night, and when it was morning the east wind brought the locusts." Upon the temporary remorse, and at the earnest intreaty of the panic-struck Pharaoh, "the Lord turned a mighty *west wind*, which took away the locusts, and cast them into the Red Sea; there remained not one locust in all the land of Egypt." The passage of the Israelites through the Red Sea was in like manner effected by the power of an *eastern wind*, which prepared a dry path, and it was by the influence of a *western wind* that the waters were made to return opportunely, and overwhelm their pursuers.

These modes, adopted by the great God of Israel, are perfectly consonant with his character as the sovereign agent through universal nature; but they are directly contrary to the expectations of the inconsiderate, and the pretensions of every impostor. He who has pre-ordained whatever shall come to pass, reveres his own wise arrangements; he will not interrupt the course he has appointed, until the exigencies or follies of mankind, shall have rendered a temporary interference necessary for the object in view, and most conducive to their good: nor will he exert new powers where those in existence can be rendered efficient. Silly mortals

are always wanton in the display of their assumed powers. They aim at exciting perpetual and universal admiration. Not being the creators of the universe, they impiously triumph in their pretended power over its laws, upon the most trivial occasions; without reflecting that he who ordained, holds them sacred upon the most important. These are facts, which, if they diminish the *wonderful*, render our admiration of the divine direction permanent and reverential. If we admit fewer facts of the miraculous kind, we believe them the more firmly. Our belief in the truth of a divine revelation, is not founded on the accurate representation of minuter circumstances of an individual miracle, but upon the importance of the object, unity in the plan, consonance in the execution, and final accomplishment of a purpose which, in its very nature demanded occasional exertions, beyond the limited influence of physical laws. But to suppose an uninterrupted series of miraculous interferences, for the space of fifteen hundred years, is to suppose a regular succession of interruptions to a pre-ordained succession of natural events. It introduces one series of constituted laws in place of another, to the destruction of a miracle. Let us acknowledge that all is of God, and we

need not be anxious to distinguish in every case, whether each event proceeded from the natural course of things, his secret and consequently *unknown* influence, or the more open and terrific manifestations of his power.

III. The characters and conduct of the principal agents employed, are correspondent with the divinity of the Jewish dispensation, and with no other hypothesis.

That Moses received his commission from God, and was under his direction in the execution of it, is manifest from various circumstances which cannot be satisfactorily explained, upon the contrary supposition. Moses could not wish to aggrandize himself, for he was aged; nor his family, for he earnestly intreated the Lord, that his son might not succeed to his honours. The primary object was not to lead a large multitude to invade and conquer, for the sole purposes of ambition. It was to counteract the prevalence of idolatry, by preserving a selected people from being totally corrupted by its baneful influence. The Israelites were appointed to possess the oracles of the true and living God, in opposition to the oracular fallacies of superstitious impostors

which inundated the world; and to maintain pure morality, in opposition to the vicious practices encouraged by false religions. To promote this object was truly worthy of God; but the accomplishment of it was inconsistent with the character of an uninspired chief. The enterprise demanded a full assurance in the existence of such a God, in the necessity of moral rectitude, and a firm confidence in the divine support. It is perfectly distinct from the projects of worldly ambition; and it requires different principles for its execution. Exalted piety, implicit obedience to the divine mandates, perpetual solicitude for the religious and moral purity of the people committed to his charge, a deep concern at their impieties, and unremitted efforts to reclaim them, are pre-requisites for the execution of such a commission; and these were possessed by Moses in an eminent degree. But they could not possibly dwell in the breast of an impostor, or exist in a man merely actuated by the principles of worldly ambition. These principles operated with equal power, when all the hopes of worldly grandeur must have subsided. In his last moments, anxiety lest the people should apostatize from Jehovah their God, was predominant in the mind of Moses; and he composed an hymn

for their instruction, that the being, superintendence, mercies, and deliverances of their God, might be held in perpetual remembrance.* Such a state of mind could alone proceed from a consciousness that he was under a divine direction; and from a confident expectation that the purposes of the Almighty would ultimately be accomplished. The same principles of true religion and morality were conspicuous in his successors, Joshua, Samuel, and other men of piety; and in the numerous prophets, who were raised up at different periods, to make known the counsels of God, to exhort, to threaten, to encourage; and in whom all the energies of the soul were manifestly engaged to promote true religion and piety; and although they were revered by their enemies for personal courage, and high integrity, they were frequently exposed to their severest resentments. Who would have undertaken such a cause under such circumstances, if he were not conscious that his commission was from above?

In a word, the whole history of this ancient people clearly demonstrates, that pure religion, and the strictest morality, constitute the basis of the Jewish dispensation. These are the principles which take the lead and pervade every

* See Deut. xxxi. & xxxii.

part. In all institutions merely human, religion is considered merely as a secondary object, and as subservient to the purposes of civil policy; here it is primary. To fear God and keep his commandments, is the grand, the universal principle, towards which every thing is directed. Civil government itself is made subordinate to it. Every event, natural or preternatural; every situation, prosperous or adverse; every human action, meritorious or culpable, contributes something towards the final triumph of true religion. This one principle operates, and the same plan is pursued through a long series of ages. Its perpetual operation demanded the instrumentality of men, of similar characters and dispositions, at periods most distant from each other; that they should be influenced by motives, infinitely superior to those which usually stimulate to action, and that these should conspire to answer a purpose in which the principal agents had no personal concern. If the sentiments of religion, which we acknowledge to be most rational, were merely the dreams of individuals, how came Moses, Joshua, Samuel, at one period to dream of its importance, and numerous prophets at subsequent and very distant periods, to take up the delusion, and continue dreaming for the good of mankind, while the

world around them was awake to consummate ignorance!! Shall we suppose that these various constellations were self-created, and undesignedly composed a whole, as Atheists say the sun was formed, or shall we acknowledge the unremitted agency of a wise and beneficent power? let common sense decide.—Again,

A person much less sagacious than Moses would have foreseen the insuperable difficulties attendant upon such an enterprise; nor would he have encountered them without dependance upon superior aid. Had the thought been suggested by ambition, it would have been abandoned through despair. This Chief perceived the difficulties in all their magnitude. It was a consciousness that he was under the divine impulse which alone could subdue his extreme repugnance; and he confesses that miracles were necessary to implant the conviction. His advanced age, for he was EIGHTY YEARS OLD when the Lord appeared unto him; his long habits of peaceful retirement in the bosom of his family;—for he had lived with Jethro his father-in-law *forty years in the character of an husbandman;*—his want of natural powers, which he urged in vain;—the discouragements of his early attempts, by which the burdens of the Hebrews were augmented, and he be-

came unpopular among them; these united with the exquisite wisdom with which the difficult task was afterwards accomplished, secure this great law-giver from the imputation of being a forward ambitious adventurer, an impostor, or a visionary enthusiast.

The minute and circumstantial narrative given us, by this historian, of the release of the Hebrews from their state of bondage, and of the various miracles he was enabled to perform, bears all the internal marks of a genuine history. The reluctance of the Egyptian king to relinquish his dominion over such a multitude of useful slaves; and the slow progressive manner in which this reluctance was finally subdued, present us with so exact a statement of the natural workings of the human mind, during every part of the alleged process, that it bears upon it the stamp of truth, not to be counterfeited. Upon his first application to the sovereign, both he and his God were treated with haughty disdain. "Who is Jehovah, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not your Lord, neither will I let Israel go." The introductory miracle being harmless, and being imitated by the magicians, it made no impression. Although the second miracle was severer in its effects, yet the imitation of the magicians still kept the mind of Pharaoh uninfluenced. Under the impres-

sion of the third, he began to relent; he promised, but revoked the promise upon the removal of the evil. As the magicians could not counterfeit the succeeding miracle, they were compelled to own that it was by the finger of God. Conscious that themselves were juggling impostors, they had entertained the same opinion of Moses, until his miracles were beyond the reach of their imitation. But the effects of this miracle were too inconsiderable to terrify and alarm. When afflicted by a grievous swarm of flies, Pharaoh began to propose conditions. He would have permitted the Hebrews to *sacrifice in the land.* This not being admitted, he was afterwards willing to let them go to a small distance, and condescended to *supplicate* that the evil might be removed. But apprehensive that the power to which he had thus yielded in a moment of calamity, would ultimately deprive him of his numerous slaves, his pride and obstinacy returned with all their force, when freed from the pangs of suffering. These apprehensions were probably the cause of his continued reluctance under the severity of the subsequent miracle. The devastation by hail and rain which afflicted his people exclusively, again awakened his fears; nor could the security enjoyed by those of his own subjects, who had

followed the salutary counsel of Moses, and the losses sustained by the incredulous, fail to operate powerfully upon his agitated mind. Under the influence of panic, he promised every thing; but the magnitude of the expected loss induced him again to recant, during the respite that followed. The menace of locusts excited a general alarm among the Egyptians; and moved by their intreaties, he now proposes to let the *Men* go. During the palpable darkness spread over the land, he became willing that the *Women* and *Children* should accompany them, contenting himself with detaining the *flocks* and *herds*, as hostages till their return. The rejection of these terms by Moses, convincing him that a full acquiescence in the requisition would terminate in an escape, he resolved to brave all the consequences of a refusal however dreadful. It is characteristic of a despot to be little affected by the calamities of his subjects, where his personal interests, his pride or ambition, are deeply concerned. He might calculate that as long as the loss of his most faithful subjects, by these awful judgments, was not equivalent to the loss of his numerous slaves, state policy would demand an obstinate resistance. But when the last affliction that was threatened, actually arrived, it was too agoniz-

ing to be borne. Terror and dismay seized every bosom, and produced an effect to which milder sufferings were inadequate.

If there be any narrative of facts possessing the internal marks of authenticity, this must be one. The gradations so observable in the punishments inflicted, perfectly harmonize with the character of the true God, who does not afflict willingly. The first miracle was merely indicative of a power superior to that boasted by others. Previously to every miracle which followed it was a menace and a warning; a portion of time was also allotted for consideration. It was the pertinacity of the sovereign which augmented the severity of each miracle; for the end was finally to be accomplished, *by the subjugation of his will.* How consonant are these gradations with the character of a Being who is reluctant to punish! How different from the conceptions, which Pagans universally formed of their fictitious beings, whom they always represented to be like themselves, swollen with pride and resentment, hasty to punish, slow to forgive, eager to manifest their sovereignty by infusing terror, and strangers to the milder attribute of mercy!!

The conviction wrought upon the minds of many of his subjects;—the long and severe con-

test in the breast of Pharaoh;—the quick impulse of actual suffering, prompting him to assent to propositions which he detested;—his various efforts to procure some degree of security against the escape of his slaves;—his being compelled by punishments, or by fearful apprehensions, to relax his demands at every stage of the conflict; are delineated with such genuine touches of nature, as all the subtleties of art could never have imitated. To suppose this minute account to be merely an *invention*, is to suppose that Moses was endowed by nature, with a deeper insight into the workings of the human mind, in fictitious circumstances, than was ever possessed by those who have made the human mind their perpetual study. Nor was he under the necessity of employing such elaborate means of deception, had he been capable. The ignorant people, of whom he was the leader, could never have demanded so much artifice in his statements; nor could there be placed before him, in that age of torpid intellect, prototypes of similar workings of the human heart, from which he could have composed such an assemblage of probabilities.

The exemplary piety of Moses; the integrity

which shone conspicuously through the whole of his legislative conduct; the care and assiduity with which he always inculcated the moral duties, in all their ramifications, ought to have protected him from the ignominious charge, of having conspired with his countrymen, to rob the Egyptians of a rich booty before their departure; or with having connived at the fraud. No man could have more accurate conceptions of justice than our legislator. Numerous instances have been adduced of the truth of this assertion. Had he observed any impropriety of conduct in the Hebrews, towards the Egyptians, it would have been more consonant with his personal character, as well as public office, to have *corrected*, than to have *encouraged* it; and certainly he would not have endangered his own reputation, by scrupulously becoming so faithful an historian of his own villany! This heavy imputation, is simply founded upon an arbitrary interpretation given to general terms. Incidental expressions can alone be explained, by an accurate knowledge of the leading principles, which gave them existence; and the attempt to establish any particular hypothesis upon vague phraseology, has always been as fatal to the truth, as an attempt to place a pyramid of Egypt

upon its apex, would be dangerous to the indiscreet projector.

Moses informs us, in the unsuspecting simplicity of his narrative, that he was ordered to let every man borrow of his neighbour, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold. The same Moses informs us also, that "the Lord gave them favour in the sight of the Egyptians;" adding moreover, that, "the man was very great in the land of Egypt, in the sight of Pharaoh's servants, and in the sight of the people." Will it be asserted, that Moses intended to inform posterity, that the Lord predisposed the minds of the Egyptians, to be deceived and robbed by the artful and designed representations of the Hebrews? Would not this be to allege that, in the opinion of our lawgiver, the Lord patronized fraud? Or, that the renown acquired by working miracles, was converted by divine direction, into an instrument of deceit? Shall we suppose, that the Almighty was so exhausted by miraculous exertions, that there was not one miracle in reserve to keep his people honest? Is it not a much easier solution to conceive, that the object of the narrative was, simply to state the deep impression made upon the minds of all the Egyptians, by the wonders which had been performed among them;—that in consequence

of these wonders, they greatly relaxed their usual severities towards the Hebrews;—that their habitual contempt was changed into respect;—that they revered Moses, the great agent of these miracles, and trembled before his God;—and that they hastened to give every assistance in their power to this protected people, lest greater evils should fall upon themselves?

The indecent imputation assumes it to be a fact, that the Israelites professed to *borrow* what they *knew* they should not be able to repay. This assumption rests upon another, which is also without its foundation. It assumes that all the Hebrews were made intimately acquainted with the plan of Providence, respecting them, in all its branches. The fact is not stated; it is not consonant with the usual tenor of the divine conduct; and it is destitute of probability. They were inspired by previous miracles with a confidence in the divine assistance, and with the hopes of deliverance from their state of oppression, and they were disposed to comply with every injunction; but nothing further was necessary for them. Without divine communications, they must have been as ignorant of the minute particulars respecting their future situation, as the Egyptians themselves. If both nations were in expectation of a return, to a melio-

rated state perhaps, after a temporary absence, the liberality of the Egyptians would be considered as a *loan*. If no such expectations were formed by the Egyptians, it must undoubtedly have been a *free gift*.

It does not appear, in any part of his history, that Moses himself was, at first, made acquainted with every contingent circumstance. He submitted to the impulse of heaven, and humbly waited for the issue. The first requisition by the divine command, was merely for the absence of *three days*, that a solemn feast might be celebrated in the wilderness contiguous. The demand was made in the name of Jehovah, in simplicity, and with integrity. Had Pharaoh complied with the requisition, we may rest assured that he would not have repented of the indulgence. Milder measures would have been pursued by the Almighty to accomplish his purpose. But upon his refusal, this condition was no longer urged; nor was it afterwards enjoined upon Moses to limit the period of their absence. He was commissioned to rise in his demands, in exact proportion as the heart of the sovereign became more and more perverse; and it is worthy of notice, that at the last interview, Moses would not accept of any other terms than an *absolute, unconditional* release. But what would

be the particular result; what the train of events which were to follow; or what course he should subsequently take, was left to subsequent revelations. Moses declared his ignorance of contingences, when Pharaoh proposed that they should go without their flocks and herds, "Our cattle also shall go with us: there shall not an hoof be left behind; for thereof must we take to serve the Lord our God: *and we know not with what we must serve the Lord, until we come thither.*"

Will not every one who professes to be guided by his reason, consider this statement more congruous and rational, than the strange supposition that Moses should hand down to posterity his connivance at theft, and be the historiographer of his own infamy, when no other being could possibly have exposed him?*

CONCLUSION.

Having thus minutely examined the Jewish dispensation, respecting its primary objects, and the manner of promoting these objects, and the result, we will venture to pronounce that it bears all the internal marks of a divine origin which can reasonably be desired.

It proclaims the existence and universal go-

* See note Q.

vernment of one God, possessing every natural, and moral, or relative perfection, to a world that had entirely lost every worthy conception respecting him. It demands the obedience of the heart to all the precepts of morality, in opposition to profane and superstitious rites.

In its introduction, it was adapted to the rude, ignorant, and depraved state of mankind; and in the progress of its developement, it has equally respected the freedom of the human mind, and the primitive laws of nature, never violating the former, and as seldom as possible deviating from the latter.

This dispensation has greatly benefited the pagan world, by the light and knowledge it has diffused.

After many conflicts, and surmounting many difficulties, this dispensation has been the means of preserving the principles of true religion and morality, through many ages of darkness, ignorance, and moral depravity, which threatened their dissolution in every period.

Finally, it gives us the strongest assurances that these blessings, with their consequent effects, are to be diffused over the whole human race.

The evidences of these facts, so correspondent with our best conceptions of a Deity, are col-

lected from the general current of the Jewish history itself, and from the exemplary characters of the principal agents, who were instrumental in accomplishing such important purposes?

We appeal to every one who professes to be governed by his reason, whether the mass of evidence which has been laid before the reader, ought to yield to the captious objections of individuals, which are so very liable to be founded on ignorance; and which, after the short indulgence of a petty triumph, have been so frequently confuted by subsequent knowledge? Should any one assert, that the primary object of a divine revelation is to satisfy human curiosity; to accommodate the indefinite but the glowing language of the East, to the frigid criticisms of distant ages; or to make us perfect and unerring in the knowledge of minutiæ, which are in themselves of very little moment, many and strong would be the objections to invalidate that position. But when we maintain, that the grand object is of so superior a nature as to overlook these frivolities; and that many inferior circumstances are left to be explained by the minuter knowledge of facts, and the discreet exercise of our reasoning powers, the inaptitude of such objections becomes most apparent.

Many very important positions are established which no objections can invalidate. The selection of a particular people for a certain purpose, the accomplishment of which could not have been expected, according to the ordinary course of human events;—the importance of this purpose;—the preference given to the descendants of Abraham, in honour of the exemplary faith and piety of their progenitor;—the means used to preserve this people from the fatal contaminations of idolatry;—their deliverance from a state of bondage, and their establishment in a land promised to their ancestors;—the superior wisdom, strict morality, sublime piety, exemplified in every institution, honoured in every punishment, and in every reward;—and the final triumph of monotheism among these people, are facts which cannot be denied or confuted by frivolous disputes about *dæmons* and *witches*, and *magicians*, and *borrowing* and *lending* of *jewels*; or the precise degrees of inspiration in every individual agent of the divine purposes. We know that the sun exists, and we consent to be cheered with his light and splendour, without waiting till astronomers shall have explained the nature, or wiped off the disgrace of those few spots, which our ignorance has placed before his disk. When it can be proved, that the

happiness of mankind is not an object worthy of the Deity; that it is not the design of the Deity to lead us, according to our nature and the extent of our faculties, from gross ignorance to knowledge and virtue; that the numerous facts recorded in the Jewish history have no relation to this object, and have contributed nothing towards its promotion; then, and not till then, may the advocates for the divine legation of Moses be alarmed, by trifling objections, urged respecting minuter subjects, over which distance of time, a difference in customs, manners, idioms of languages, and other circumstances, have thrown a temporary veil.

But if the legation of Moses be divine, then it is an indubitable fact, that the great universal Parent superintends the happiness of his creatures; and it is proclaimed from heaven, that HAPPINESS CAN ALONE BE OBTAINED THROUGH THE MEDIUM OF PURE RELIGION, AND THE PRACTICE OF EVERY PERSONAL AND SOCIAL VIRTUE.

END OF DISQUISITION THE SECOND.

NOTES

TO THE

PRECEDING TREATISE.

Note A.

After " Its beneficent designs." Page 31.

The usual distinction of the divine attributes is into *natural* and *moral*. To the latter, some writers refer the attribute of *power*; and most of them *wisdom* and *knowledge*. But this division does not appear to be sufficiently accurate. Power conveys simply a *physical* idea: Wisdom and Knowledge, abstractedly considered, are *intellectual*. But physical and intellectual powers, can alone be connected with a *moral* character, by the manner in which they are exercised; for malignant spirits are supposed to possess them to a great extent. As the displays of divine power, knowledge, wisdom, and goodness, are solely made known to us by the works of creation, and as they are equally *operative*, respecting this creation, they may with strict propriety be termed *relative*. The attributes essential to the divine existence not being operative, cannot have a relation to other existences. They are essentially inert. The *Goodness* of God, when duly considered, will be found to comprehend every moral attribute; for it is not only manifested in beneficence, compassion, and mercy, but it is the basis of righteousness, justice, and truth. The distinctions, therefore, of the relative attributes introduced in the text, into *physical*, *intellectual*, and *moral*, appear to be more consonant with precision.

This mode of investigation naturally suggests to our minds the idea of passive or inert, and active or relative attributes; the first, inspiring wonder and amazement; the latter, fear, reverence, and love; and their union overwelming the feeble faculties of man!

Note B.

After " Objects of Sense." Page 52.

We refer our readers to a former note upon this subject, in which several examples are given of terms originally metaphorical, becoming technical by perpetually recurring.—See Ethical Treatise, Part I. Note D.

In fact, a sentence can scarcely be used which does not contain some expression, which would elucidate the fact. The Analyser of language will discover many instances, in this and the preceding passage.

It is confessed by philosophers, that " there is no greater impediment to the advancement of knowledge, than the ambiguity of words;" and there cannot be a more copious source of ambiguity, than indecision of mind, whether an expression should be taken literally or metaphorically, or mistaking the one for the other. By the former, the mind is held in the *suspense* of ignorance; by the latter, ignorance absolutely *mistakes resemblances* for the subjects themselves; and mere accidents are confounded with identities.

Note C.

After " Which once tormented his soul." Page 60.

We beg leave to refer our readers to what has been advanced, in our Philosophical Treatise on the Passions, concerning the peculiar and characteristic excellencies of *Complacency;* and they will perceive that this divine affection is alone applicable, in its full extent, to a wise and

perfect being. He that wills the good of his creatures, who best knows in what that good consists, and by what means it is to be accomplished, and who is fully assured of the final issue, must enjoy the perfect bliss of this blissful attribute! He is not only acquainted with, but he induces and approves of those temporary scenes, which distress his creatures, and excite their impatient and murmuring lamentations; for he knows it is *right that they should suffer*. Their sufferings are the efficacious means of improving their virtues, of forming their moral characters to excellencies which he loves, and which he will ultimately reward with permanent felicity.

Note D.

After "Were to take place." Page 105.

That these miraculous interferences would exist as long as they were necessary, there can be no reason to doubt. But that they did take place periodically, does not appear. It is possible that the disobedient conduct of the Hebrews, might have made them unworthy of the honour. It is manifest, however, that in obedience to the law, they omitted cultivating the land every seventh year. For among the privileges granted by Alexander in his interview with the high priest, we find that they were exempted from paying tribute every seventh year: and when the Samaritans requested the same exemption, they alleged, that "in that year they did not till their lands." See Joseph, Vol. II. in loco.

Note E.

After "He went out from Pharaoh in great anger." Page 173.

A transposition of some verses in this and the preceding chapter, is evidently necessary. In the tenth chapter of Exodus, verses 28, 29, we are informed, that Pharaoh said unto Moses, "Get thee from me, take heed to thyself, see my face no more; for in that day thou seest my face thou shalt die; and Moses said, thou hast spoken well, I will see thy face again no more." Yet from the fourth to the eighth verse of chap. 11, it should appear that Moses had a subsequent interview. The two last verses of the preceding chapter, should manifestly be placed towards the close of the eighth verse of the tenth chapter.

Note F.

After "Be burnt as a memorial." Page 186.

A similar attention to the gradations of culpability is observable in the laws respecting man-slaughter. Cities of refuge were appointed at convenient distances, to the nearest of which the undesigning agent might flee. Such dreadful accidents are frequently the result of inadvertency; for which this injunction was a proper punishment. The injunction also paid due attention to the irritated state of mind, of the parties immediately concerned; while it protected the object from their revengeful pursuits.*

* Deut. xix. 1—13.

Again, if any one was found murdered in the fields, the perpetrator remaining unknown, a law was instituted, in order to excite universal horror at such atrocious crimes, which, to a certain degree, seemed to implicate the adjacent districts in the offence. The elders and judges of the city nearest to the spot, were ordered to slay an heifer, in a solemn manner, wash their hands over it, and make a public declaration of their innocence.*

By these wise and salutary edicts, connected with the paucity of capital offences which were admitted into the Jewish code, this rude people were gradually civilized into a benevolent regard for human life; an indifference to which, respecting others, is no equivocal indication of a savage temper. The impressions thus made, might also be the means of preserving the Israelites from the sin of offering human sacrifices to idols, even in the state of their greatest degeneracy.

Note G.

After "Guilty of delusion." Page 195.

When the author commenced his inquiries into the Jewish history, for the purposes of this disquisition, he resolved to confine himself to that alone, until he had exhausted the train of his own ideas relative to the subject, without calling in the aid of any other writer. He was apprehensive that his mind might be embarrassed by the diversities of their respective plans, or be seduced into some particular hypothesis by the partiality of their

* Deut. xix. 1—9.

statements. But it gives him much satisfaction to find, that there is, in the essential points, a coincidence between his sentiments, and those of the most distinguished vindicators of the Jewish dispensation. To these authors he must refer, for minuter statements of some particulars than it was consistent with his plan to give. In the excellent dissertation of Mr. M. Lowman on the civil government of the Hebrews, the reader will find ample and satisfactory information concerning the most important points of the Jewish history; particularly concerning the distribution of territories; the peculiar office of the Levitical order; the general government of the Hebrew nation; oracular communications; the equity of punishing the idolatrous Canaanites; and a vindication of several of the prohibitory laws of Moses, which have been censured as frivolous, by those who are not well disposed towards the legislator. Of the latter, we shall transcribe the following instances. "However trifling some of the Mosaic laws may appear at first view, and unworthy the wisdom of God to enact them as laws, yet the case will appear quite otherwise, when they are considered as necessary provisions against the danger of idolatry. The law, for instance, that appoints, *Ye shall not round the corners of your heads, neither shalt thou mar the corners of thy beard,* will appear directions of importance, when it was to prevent a magical custom of idolatrous priests, who made this sort of cutting off their hair and their beards, essential to their worship; and used them as things of consequence, in order to procure from their idols the several blessings they desired and prayed for. In like

manner, we may easily perceive a reason, why the law should direct, *neither shall a garment mingled of linen and woollen come upon thee*, when we understand, that such mixed garments of linen and woollen, were the proper habits of idolatrous priests; and were supposed to have some powerful magical virtue in them. For the same reason, we may easily understand the wisdom of appointing by law, that *the woman shall not wear that which appertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment; for all that do so are abomination to the Lord thy God;* when it was an idolatrous custom of their neighbours that men ought to stand before the star of Venus in the flowered garments of women; and women were to put on the armour of men before the star of Mars."*

We might adduce from profane writers, innumerable instances of the gross immorality that was encouraged by pagan worship. It was absolutely the *consecration of vice.* It authorized and commanded every enormity. The rites observed in the worship of Bacchus, Osiris, Ceres, and Venus, were too obscene to be stated in popular language, and their very flagrancy prevents their exposure. The *Phalli* and *Mylli*, favourite rites in the worship of those deities, are thus described; "tum privatim, tum publicè, lignea virilia thyrsis alligata, per eam solemnitatem gestabant, fuit enim *Phallus* vocatum, membrum virile." (Shædius *de diis Germanis.*)

Heraclides of Syracuse says, "ex sesamo et melle fingi pudenda muliebra, quæ per ludos et spectacula circumferebantur, et in tota Sicilia vocabantur *Mylli.*"

Cicero accuses the poets of giving the following cha-

* See Dissert. page 18.

racter of the deities they celebrated, and who were the patterns of imitation: "qui et ira inflammatos, et libidine furentes, induxerunt deos; feceruntque ut eorum bella, pugnas, prælia, vulnera, videremus: odia, præterea, dissidia, discordias, ortus, interitus, querelas, lamentationes, effusas in omni intemperantia, libidines, adulteria, vincula, cum humano genere concubitus, mortalesque ex immortali procreatos," &c. &c. (De Natura Deorum, Lib. 1. cap. 16.)

Concerning human sacrifices Justin remarks, "cruenta sacrorum religione, et scelere pro remedio usi sunt. Quippe homines ut victimas immolabant, et impuberes, quæ ætas etiam hostium misericordiam provocat, aris admovebant. Pacem deorum sanguine eorum pro quorum vita Dii, rogari maxime solent." (Just. Lib. 18. cap. 6.)

Mr. Bryant, in his observations concerning the plagues of Egypt, tells us from Plutarch, that the "Egyptians had several cities styled Typhonian, such as Heliopolis, Idithyia, Abaris, and Busiris. In these, at particular seasons, they sacrificed men. The objects thus destined were persons of bright hair, and a particular complexion; such as was seldom found among the native Egyptians. Hence he infers that they were foreigners; and that they were chosen from the Israelites, while they resided in Egypt. They were burnt alive upon a high altar, and thus sacrificed for the good of the people." (See Observ. page 104.)

Note H.

After "To an object of worship." Page 206.

That learned and indefatigable Biblical critic, the Rev.

Mr. J. Simpson, has paid peculiar attention to this subject. He asserts that "the word שטן including its derivatives, occurs fourteen times in the book of Job, and twenty times in the other books of the Old Testament, in all *thirty-four times*. These are very few, he observes, if Satan be a real person, and had so large a sphere of action upon this globe, as is generally assigned to him, through so long a period as that to which the several books of the Old Testament relate: especially as these books consider the world in the peculiar view of its being governed by God alone." He adds, "from a fair examination of the several passages, it appears, that the sense of *adversary* as an appellative, is the true one. It appears also that the term is in all cases applied to *human adversaries*, except in two instances, in which it is used concerning the angel of Jehovah." See Essays on the language of Scripture. By J. Simpson. 1806. Essay II.

Note I.

After "Was the god of flies." Page 207.

Mr. Bryant observes, that the province of many of their deities was to chase away flies. Even the great Jupiter was sometimes termed the μυιαγρος απομυιος, the *Fly-chaser*. Those who had no tutelar deity to protect them against these insects, thought it prudent to worship the insects themselves, that they might become less troublesome. In some places, that most useful animal the ox, was sacrificed to render these little torments more propitious! In other places, where the whole race was not worshipped, they had a select *deus musca*, a fly God.

This god was worshipped at Cyrene under the name of Achor, and was carried from Egypt to Palestine. He was also called *Zebul*, which signifies a fly, and being joined to the word Baal, represents this deity as the lord of flies.

Mr. Bryant proposes a correction in a passage relative to Ahaziah, the son of Ahab, in the first chapter of the second book of Kings, where it is said that Ahaziah, who was sick, "sent messengers, and said unto them, go and enquire of Baal-zebul, the god of Ekron, whether I shall recover of this disease." He maintains that it should be rendered, *go and enquire in the temple of Baal, of the Fly-god Accaron.* He supports this alteration by the authority of Josephus, who in giving the same history of Ahaziah says, that *being ill he sent to enquire of Accaron, the god-fly; for that (Accaron) was the name of the deity.* The Greek version favours this opinion also, which says, *go and enquire in the temple of Baal, of the Fly-god* Accaron, *if I shall recover of my infirmity.* Mr. Bryant further maintains, that the messengers were not sent to Ekron, which lay south of Judah, but to Baal of the Tyrians and Sidonians; whose temple and oracle was becoming famous. The worship of this god had been introduced into the kingdom of Israel by Ahab, the father of Ahaziah. (See Observations on the plagues of Egypt, by Jacob Bryant, Esq. 1810. page 54.)

Note K.

After "Discover or invent." Page 225.

After having adduced such a force of evidence from

the highest authority, surely no one will urge the frivolous objection, founded upon particular modes of expression, which were occasionally used. It cannot be expected, that even inspired writers should be commanded to pay such a scrupulous attention to modern ideas as to adopt, by anticipation, the philosophical precision which may be highly necessary for those who are compelled to investigate truths, by the slow inductions of reason, but not to those who are instructed from on high. After it was repeatedly proclaimed, by the voice of inspiration, that there are no gods, that they were merely idols whom the heathens worshipped; that the priests were deceivers, and the people deceived, there could be no danger in using the popular language, in order to avoid unnecessary circumlocution, and occasionally to speak of things which are not, as if they were. It is scarcely possible to treat of acknowledged non-entities, without giving them, at the moment, a kind of existence in the imagination. We cannot attempt to prove that a shadow is not a substance, or that it proceeds from the absence or a partial defect of light, in a given place, without ascribing to it a substantial form, and animadverting upon its properties. Language was formed and became current, before science could take the lead; and truths subsequently discovered, must submit to its dictates. We no longer imagine, as formerly hinted, that a splenetic person has a disease of the spleen; or that it is essential to the choleric, that they should be troubled with the black bile; yet we employ the terms, with our consciences perfectly at ease. Those who are fully convinced of the truth of the copernican system, still speak of the rising and setting sun, as incautiously

as if it actually moved round the globe. Our youths cannot be instructed in the history and characters of the heathen deities without being told, in positive terms, that Jupiter was the father of gods and men, that Bacchus was the god of wine, Mars the god of war, Venus the goddess of love, Minerva of wisdom, &c. We do not feel ourselves obliged to inform them, every moment, that we have adopted the language of pagans, without embracing their notions. Yet, if we may argue from analogy, it is very possible that, after the lapse of ten or fifteen centuries, some systematic or scientific theorist, may assert that the Christians of the nineteenth century firmly believed in the heathen mythology, and produce their current language as an evidence of the position. When Moses informs us that the magicians did likewise with their enchantments, it is easy to understand by the expression, simply that they were such adepts in their arts as to impose upon the spectators; and as they were deceived, all the purposes of his history were answered; for the influence upon their minds was the same. Thus also when we are told that Saul resolves to consult "a woman who had a familiar spirit, and his servants say unto him, Behold, there is a woman who hath a familiar, in Endor;" it is more rational to confine these expressions to the credulity of the parties concerned, than to extend them, contrary to the most explicit assurances, to a confirmation of their principles. The supposed conversation between Samuel and Saul, did not exceed the current reports and expectations of the day, to which this artful woman could not have been a stranger; and which it was not difficult to impose

upon the disturbed mind of her sovereign, as a divine oracle.

We are perfectly satisfied with having stated, in an ample manner, the positive declarations of Jehovah upon this subject, by the mouths of his prophets; with which the narrative of facts in the Mosaic history is so consonant. We shall not, therefore, enter into any debate upon this subject, or attempt to explain, in what manner we are to understand those numerous expressions in the New Testament, which seem to militate against the declaration of Jehovah himself. Nor shall we enquire how the land of Judah became populated, by these aerial and invisible beings, about the time of our Saviour, when their existence was unknown to the ancient Jews. When such men as Locke, Dr. Clark, Doddridge, Benson, Taylor, and others, entertained the opinion that evil beings actually existed, the subject is not to be treated with levity. They have, however, formidable opponents in the Rev. Mr. Farmer on the subject of demoniacs; and the Rev. Mr. J. Simpson in the Essay already quoted. Both these gentlemen have entered very minutely into the question, and maintain their tenets with a force of argument which merits attention.

It is a singular fact, which has not been sufficiently attended to, that although the current language of the New Testament seems to intimate a general belief in the existence of malignant spirits, in the land of Judea, yet there are no instances of the *practical influence* of the creed. They were never worshipped; there are no marks of incantations, or the use of superstitious ceremonies, to soothe their malice; nor of any supplications to the

true God, for protection against them. So that, if their existence was believed, it was a mere inert opinion: And it is as singular a fact, that the perverse imaginations of numerous Christians have revived those works of darkness, which the Saviour came to destroy. During many ages, has the Christian church not only believed in the existence, but in the *perpetual agency* of such beings. Public prayers have been composed, and are continually repeated, to be delivered from their malignancy. Credulity has compressed those mighty beings "who once dared the Omnipotent to arms," into little irksome mischievous imps; and has rendered them as numerous as the flies that meander in the sun. Superstition has consecrated the bells of our churches, that their undulations may keep these evil spirits at a distance from departing souls; and it expects either to drown the little immortals in holy water, or to inspire them with a kind of hydrophobia, which makes them shudder at its approach. So obstinately perverse have been these errors, that pious and learned divines have thought it their duty to place those who disbelieve the existence of such agents, in the rank of *incorrigible* ATHEISTS. Notions like these are, in fact, the revival of paganism in the very centre of Christianity. They are a close resemblance of the perverse idolatry of the Jews, in spite of the monotheism peculiar to their religion: and they prove that Ignorance breeds dæmons, fiends, imps, &c. &c. as numerous, and as various, as the animalculæ which are produced from putrefactions.

Note L.

After "An idolatrous world." Page 322.

The reader will perceive that our attention is strictly confined to the *religious* and *moral* history of the Jews, and its influence on the Pagan world. Many other writers have considered this favoured people as the source of universal knowledge. To them is ascribed the origin of language; the inventions of art, the discoveries in sciences. They are considered as the patterns of civil policy; and from them are the most celebrated philosophers of antiquity supposed to have derived their choicest ideas, in morals and theology. In proportion as these positions can be established, will they augment the lustre of the Jewish dispensation, by evincing the extent of the blessings diffused through its medium. But the subject is not in our province. See Warburton's Divine Legation of Moses, Gale's Court of the Gentiles, and other authors, for ample discussions.

Note M.

After "Apes and Peacocks." Page 375.

The learned have entertained various opinions concerning the situation of the land of Ophir; what is to be understood by the navy of Tarshish; and with what propriety an extensive and uncertain voyage could be stated with such precision in point of time. But Mr. Bruce has thrown much light upon the subject. He considers *Monomotapa*, on the south-east coast of Africa, and opposite to the island of Madagascar, to

be the land of *Ophir:* and he asserts that to sail from the extremity of the Red Sea to Monomotapa, and return by means of the regular trade winds, which prevail in the Indian ocean, requires precisely that space of time; the navigators being obliged to wait for these winds.

See Bruce's Travels, 8vo. edition, 1805, vol. ii. ch. iv. for a particular statement of his opinions, and his arguments in support of them.

Note N.

After "Horrid events." Page 407.

It is necessary to advert to the singular manner in which Babylon was taken by Cyrus, in order fully to comprehend the force of some of the above expressions. At first he besieged the city for the space of two years; in the hopes that he should compel, by famine, the inhabitants to surrender. In this he was unsuccessful. They boasted that they had provisions against a siege of twenty years; and, confiding in the immense strength of the fortifications, they ridiculed every attempt that was made against them. Cyrus finally resolved to turn that branch of the Euphrates, which flowed through the city, into an adjacent lake. This lake had been made artificially, in a preceding reign, either by *Nebuchadnezzar*, or his daughter-in-law, *Nitocris*. The original object was to relieve the city, and the districts around it, from devastations by the overflowings of the river. But a design being entertained to form a communication under the bed of the river, within the walls, from one part of the city to the other, the lake was enlarged to the size of *forty miles* square; its depth was, according to

some, *thirty-five* feet; according to others, *seventy-five.* Cyrus diverted the stream in a similar manner, into this enormous lake; and marched his troops at midnight under the walls, and through the bed of the river. He chose the season of a great festival, for the execution of his purpose. He knew that both princes and people would be absorbed in pleasures, and rendered, by their intemperance, incapable of making a formidable resistance. The walls of the city are related to have been eighty-seven feet in thickness; three hundred and fifty in height; and four hundred and eighty furlongs in circumference; forming an exact square; each side being fifteen miles in length: and each side had twenty-five gates of solid brass.

These circumstances being recollected, will give a peculiar emphasis to the expressions: "I will break in pieces the *gates of brass*, and cut in sunder the bars of iron. I will loose the loins of Kings to open before them, the *two-leaved gates*. *A drought is upon her waters, and they shall be dried up.* The king of Babylon hath heard the report of them, and *his hand waxed feeble; anguish took hold of him*, a pang, as of a woman in travel. *I will make drunk her princes, and her wise men, her captains, and her rulers, and her mighty men, and they shall sleep a perpetual sleep.*

For an ample description of this great city, see Prideaux's Connect. vol I. For the particular manner in which it was taken, see Xenophon's Cyropædia, book vii.

Note O.

After "Pious zeal of his successors." Page 430.

When our acquaintance with the religion of the Hin-

doos commenced, and their sacred writings were explored by Europeans, the many sublimities in their theology, made a deep impression upon divines and philosophers. Some believers were manifestly alarmed at apparent excellencies, which seemed to rival the institutes which Christians admit to be divine; and unbelievers, in the wantonness of their triumph, manifested a much stronger propensity to become Hindoos, than to embrace Christianity. But when a novel object is first presented to us, its unexpected resemblance to something known, is considered as a perfect likeness; and perhaps it will appear to a prejudiced mind, or a whimsical fancy, as the *more comely* of the two. A more intimate acquaintance will, however, remove the deception; and deformities may finally be so conspicuous, that we shall become ashamed at our having been deluded by first appearances. This is exactly the case with the religion of the Hindoos, that boasted rival of the Mosaic laws. The admiration of the moment was a stimulus to further researches; and in proportion to the extent of these researches, the more rapidly has admiration subsided, until it has given place to disappointment and disgust. In the writings of the elegant Sir William Jones, and in a *comparison of the institutions of Moses with those of the Hindoos and other ancient nations*, by the indefatigable Dr. Priestley, as well as in the works of several other writers, conversant with the oriental literature, we are presented with a digest of the various tenets of the Hindoos, respecting their philosophy, their speculative theology, principles of morality, religious ordinances, rites, customs, &c. Whoever consults these works will be amazed at the patience of the authors, in

wading, with so much perseverance, through such a collection of absurdities, frivolities, immoralities, impieties, and obscenity! If he be not prevented by the emotions of indignation and contempt, at the extravagant prejudices of professed philosophers, he will smile at their credulity in believing that the Jewish laws should possess inferior merit, or even be derived from so impure a source: laws in which consistency, dignified simplicity, rational representations of the Deity, unmixed with the eccentricities of a wild imagination, undebased by absurd and fanciful emblems; and the chasest morality, unpolluted by impious, frivolous, or barbarous customs, are so conspicuous in every part!

Note P.

After "Peculiarities of the country." Page 438.

Mr. Bryant, in the treatise already mentioned, endeavours, with much ingenuity and learning, to point out a peculiar propriety in all the miracles inflicted upon the Egyptians, by tracing a correspondence between the nature of each miracle, with the character, situation, and religious prejudices of the people; and illustrative of the declaration, "against all the gods of Egypt will I execute judgment." The Egyptians not only worshipped the River Nile, but they thought it the father of the gods; by its waters being turned into blood, the impotency of this god was manifested in the most impressive manner. Those impostors, the Egyptian priests, were also punished with due severity; for their aversion to blood was extended to a ridiculous excess.

Frogs were sacred to Osiris; and they were deemed an emblem of prophetic influence. Hence the propriety of their being inflicted as a plague.

The immense swarms of lice were peculiarly distressing to people who "thought it a great profanation of the temple which they entered, if any animalcules of this sort were concealed in their garments; while their rites were filthy, and to the last degree bestial and obscene."

It has already been remarked that flies were also objects of adoration.

The murrain among the cattle was a just punishment for their absurd adoration of the Cow, and the peculiar veneration of their god Apis, in the form of a bull.

Concerning the plague of boils, "which was upon the Magicians, and upon all the Egyptians," the author observes that "this plague, like those which preceded, was peculiarly well calculated to confound the Egyptians, and to confirm the faith of the Israelites. For as the latter are not said to have been involved in the calamity, we may fairly infer that they were exempted from it; this must have increased their confidence in the God of their fathers, and in his servant Moses. This instance of divine punishment, was also of such a nature as shewed the baseness and imbecility of the Egyptian deities, who could neither ward off the evil when impending, nor afford any alleviation when it was brought on. Yet the Egyptians had many gods, and those of high rank, who were supposed to preside over pharmacy and medicine; and to these the people looked up with great confidence, in all those pains and maladies to which the human frame is liable. Among these, Esculapius was held in peculiar honour for his skill in this science, &c.

The sprinkling of the ashes from the furnace towards heaven, had a peculiar reference to the customs of the Egyptian priests, who, when they burnt human sacrifices, scattered the ashes in blessing the people.

The judgment of rain, hail, and fire, was calculated to excite the greatest consternation, as heavy rains were a phænomenon in Egypt, where even the mildest showers are scarcely known; while the injury done to the flax that was bolled, by the dreadful storm, was peculiarly distressing; as flax and fine linen were the chief articles of commerce.

Egypt was not peculiarly subject to the devastations made by the swarms of locusts. They were brought upon the land by an east wind; and they came from Arabia. The calamity inflicted by this punishment was great; and it shewed also the impotency of those gods, whose peculiar province it was to chase away such evils. The Greeks, who derived their superstitions from Egypt, styled locusts *Cornopes*, and they worshipped *Hercules*, under the title of *Cornopion*, for having freed their country from locusts.

The Egyptians, as well as other heathen nations, worshipped *darkness* as the primary god, the first cause of all things. The palpable darkness, therefore, inflicted upon the land of Egypt for so long a period, while the land of Goshen continued to enjoy the light, was calculated to convince them of their extreme folly.

The Egyptians, as Mr. Bryant observes, "abounded with emblematical deities, and were beyond measure attached to them; and their learning, as well as their outward sanctity, made their religion very specious and

captivating. Herodotus says, that *of all the people upon earth they were the most extravagantly devoted to their gods and religion. They have distinguished more portends and prodigies, than all people in the world collectively. And when any thing esteemed a prodigy happens, they observe and write down whatever ensues upon it; and if in process of time any similar appearance should occur, they imagine that the same consequences will follow.* If this were the case we see a further analogy and propriety in God's judgments. He exhibited before their eyes some real prodigies which could not be mistaken, and punished them in their own way, for their credulity and superstition," &c.

The tenth and last plague, the death of the first-born through the land, must have filled the minds of all people with horror and consternation. "But the Egyptians, of all the nations upon the earth, were, according to Herodotus, most frantic in their grief. When any person died in a family, all the relations and friends of the deceased co-operated in a scene of sorrow. The process was to quit the house; and the women with their hair loose, and their bosoms bare, ran wild about the street; the men also, with their apparel equally disordered, kept them company; shrieking, howling, and beating themselves." If such were the distress for an individual, what imagination can conceive of a scene that could equal this!

These general outlines will be sufficient to corroborate our remarks in the text. We refer the reader to the work itself for the enlargement; and also to Mr. Bryant's Dissertation upon the divine mission of Moses. In which

the folly of the attempt to undertake so great an enterprise, as that of conducting the Hebrews through such numberless difficulties, by means merely human, is stated with great force.

Note Q.

After " Have exposed him." Page 445.

Bishop Warburton, in his treatise *on the divine legation of Moses,* introduces his subject with the following pertinent observation : " The writers in defence of revealed religion, distinguish their arguments into two sorts ; the one they call the *internal,* and the other the *external* evidence. Of these, the first is, in its nature, more simple and perfect, and even capable of demonstration ; while the other, made up of very dissimilar materials, and borrowing aid from without, must needs have some parts of unequal strength with the rest ; and consequently lie open to the attacks of a willing adversary. Besides, the *internal* evidence is, by its nature, perpetuated ; and so fitted for all times and periods ; while the *external,* by length of time, weakens and decays. For the nature and genius of the religion defended, affording the proofs of the first kind, these materials of defence are inseparable from its existence ; but time may, and doth efface, memorials independent of that existence, out of which the external evidence is composed ; which evidence must, therefore, become more and more imperfect. But was there no other benefit accruing from the cultivation of the *internal* evidence, than the gaining by it a more perfect knowledge

of revealed religion, this surely would fully recompense the pains."

The Bishop, complaining that the *internal* evidence has been too much neglected, subjoins, " perhaps it is because writers have, in general, imagined the difficulties of effectually prosecuting the *internal* methods not to be so easily surmounted, as those are which the writer in the *external* is engaged in; while they suppose that the latter, to be master of his subject, needs only the usual requisites of church history, common diligence, and judgment: but that the reasoner on the *internal* proof must, besides these, have a thorough knowledge of human nature, civil policy, the universal history of mankind, an exact idea of the Mosaic and Christian dispensations, cleared from the froth and grounds of school subtilties, and church systems; and, above all, should be blessed with a certain sagacity, to investigate the relations of human actions, through all the combinations of natural, civil, and moral complexities."*

Had the author of these disquisitions supposed, that the possession of so many qualifications were necessary for investigating of the contents of the Old Testament, he would not have made the attempt. He imagined that a minute attention to the nature and object of the Jewish dispensation, to its different parts, their relation to a whole, and to the infinite importance of this whole, would sufficiently enable him to place the internal evidence of its divine origin, in a perspicuous and satisfactory point of view; and he hopes that he has not been totally unsuccessful. He thinks that he has ar-

* See Warburton's Divine Legat. B. 1. Sect. 1.

ranged, as in a phalanx, a compact host of evidence, vast, steadfast, impenetrable; defying the sabres of any irregular skirmishers to gain the least ground upon them, or to make any alarming impression.

It is however desirable that there should be a perfect harmony between these two kinds of evidence; and numerous are the writers whose works evince that such an harmony subsists. The learned and elaborate Bishop of Gloucester has, in his extensive treatise on the divine legation of Moses, pointed out their intimate relation: we might also refer to Mr. Lowth's *vindication of the divine authority and inspiration of the writings of the Old and New Testament;* Harmer; Sir J. Chardin's Travels; Bruce's Travels; Jew's Letters; and Lowman *on the Hebrew government.* But we beg leave particularly to notice, *Lectures on the four last books of the Pentateuch,* by the Rev. Richard Graves, in two vols. 8vo. a work lately published, which proves, in a very satisfactory manner, that Moses was the author of the Pentateuch, and instituted the civil and religious constitution of the Hebrews; and it contains more minute and circumstantial answers to various objections, than was consistent with our plan, or our limits. A recent publication by Jacob Bryant, Esq. containing *observations upon the plagues inflicted upon the Egyptians,* is worthy of great attention. It is the object of the author to *shew the peculiarity of those judgments, and their correspondence with the rites and idolatries of that people.* See also Priestley's Scriptural Notes, and Burder's Oriental Customs.

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ERRATA.

The following Errata influence the sense.

Page 302 l. 2, for insuperable r. insufferable.
359 10, for penitence r. dependence.
375 5, for Judea r. India.
—— 10, for India r. Judea.

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